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K.Balagopal

LEADERS BEYOND MEDIA IMAGES

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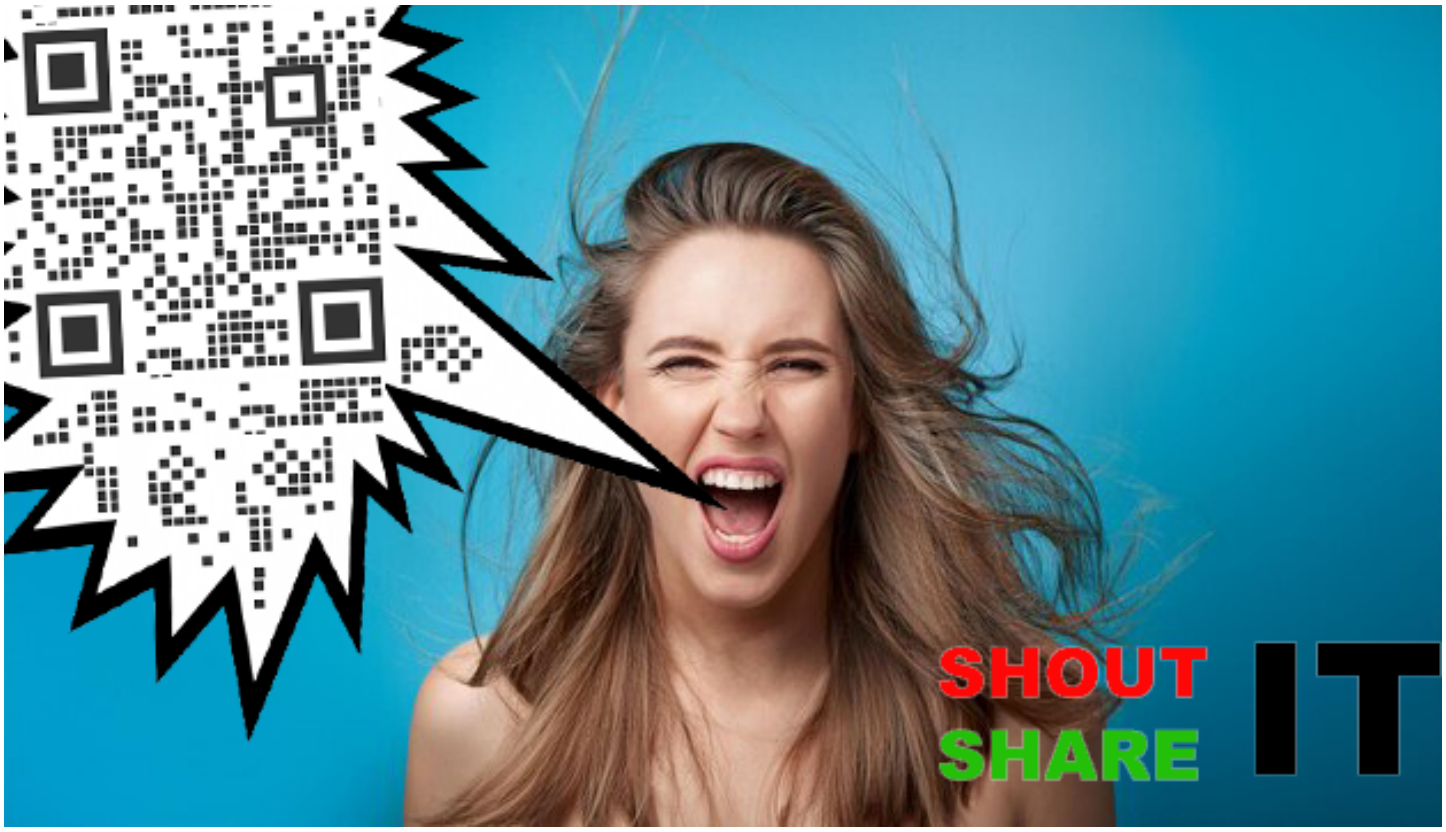
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LEADERS BEYOND MEDIA IMAGES

K.Balagopal

It is one thing to recognise order and causation where it exists, and to recognise human subjectivity in history; but quite another thing to seek the working out of a neat pattern of Reason acted out by social collectivities set up as historical subjects. All such thinking leads to overt or covert reification of history, which in turn leads to Utopian prescriptions for putting an end to such history. And all Utopias are anti-human, even the most humane of them. The human subject - both as an individual and as a collective - is too small to bear the heavy weight of Utopias. It can only be crushed by them. A non-utopian radicalism requires a non-rationalising mode of analysis; a mode of seeking truth, for truth must necessarily be sought, that will accept reason but will reject Reason, and will be adequately cautious in identifying patterns of orderliness and causation in history, keeping it always in mind that the history is *human,* and therefore always carries with it a large quantity of contingency, in every sense of that term: finiteness, disharmony, incongruence, accident, whimsicality, and so on.

K.Balagopal

K Balagopal (1952-2009) was born in Bellary, Karnataka to Kandala Parthanatha Sarma and Nagamani. His life partner was Vemana Vasantha Lakshmi, a journalist, and they have a son, Rigobertha Prabhatha. Balagopal has a Ph.D in mathematics, a subject he taught at the Kakatiya University, Warangal from 1981 to 1985. He entered the legal profession in 1996 and defended cases of adivasis, women, dalits and workers, creating spaces for those who could not otherwise access justice in the courts. He was General Secretary of Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee for 15 years from 1983 to 1998. He was a founder member of Human Rights Forum, an organization he led till his last. He was also a member of Virasam (Revolutionary Writers' Association) for many years. In 1986, Balagopal was arrested under the National Security Act and jailed for several months. In 1989, he was kidnapped by Prajabandhu, a covert organization floated by the police and beaten up in 1992 by a similar group. In addition to several independent writings, he also wrote columns for many big and small newspapers. He was a prolific writer in both English and Telugu and a regular contributor to the Economic and Political Weekly. Balagopal was one of the founding members of Perspectives.

Balagopal's birth: 10-6-1952 Death: 8-10-2009

Balagopal's writings are available at www.balagopal.org

LEADERS BEYOND MEDIA IMAGES

By
K.BALAGOPAL

Editor
G.HARAGOPAL

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ABOUT PERSPECTIVES

The future of humanity is the subject of much debate and discussion today. It is a characteristic of Progressive thought that it desires a society free from inequality and oppression. But there is no consensus among progressive thinkers about the contours of such a society. The debate that took a definitive shape with Marx is yet to reach a conclusion. As history brings to the fore ever new forms of and even new points of view about - inequality and oppression, the debate is taking a more incisive shape. And is also becoming more complicated. As some of the newly uncovered manifestations of inequality and oppression are infact quite old, the legitimate question why they have been invisible to progressive thinkers till today comes to the fore, and adds some heat to the debate.

Persons of diverse viewpoints and diverse political struggles are joining the debate. Some are focussing on hitherto invisible forms of oppression and inequality; some insist that current revolutionary philosophies are incapable of accounting for them; some believe that the attempt to set up new areas of oppression as subjects of political theory and practice is a diversionary exercise; some believe that revolutionary 'theory' and 'organisation' are in themselves a hindrance to human progress; some believe that all the attempts at progress that have hitherto taken place are a colossal waste of effort; some believe that lessons can be learnt from the successes and failures of these attempts; some are participants in political struggles; some have nothing to do with political practice. Such are the varied hues of the participants of this debate.

PERSPECTIVES has a certain view point regarding this debate. From times as ancient as that of the Buddha, philosophers have thought and theorised about human society. They have set up unquestionable ideas as the goals of human society. They have indicated the means of attaining the goals. It was Marx who gave this search a rational basis and stood it on its feet. Ever since Marx, the debate has centred on his ideas and his theory of

progress. Those who accept them, those who would revise them and those who reject them have all equally taken his ideas as their point of departure. The current debate that has surfaced with the changes in the erstwhile Soviet Union, China and East Europe is no exception to this. And we believe that in future too no debate about human social transformation can ignore Marxism.

And yet it cannot be said that Marxism has satisfactorily overcome all its theoretical and practical problems. Indeed, even as old problems are tackled, new challenges to Marxism are coming forth and reinterpretations or alternatives to Marxism are being proposed. The debate about Marxism is part of the larger radical debate about social transformation.

It is the aim of PERSPECTIVES to provide a forum for all the trends and all the view points in this debate about social transformation, without prejudging any viewpoint. Any idea that opposes inequality and oppression is a democratic idea, a progressive idea. And the differences beyond this basic commonality must necessarily be heard, studied and debated. In this sense, PERSPECTIVES believes that the call :-

Let hundred flowers blossom
Let hundred schools of thought contend

- issued by Mao at a certain point of Chinese history has general validity and meaning. It is with that understanding that PERSPECTIVES undertakes its publications.

It is our aim to further the ongoing ***'Great Debate'*** by publishing competently written works with a broadly democratic viewpoint, principally in Telugu, but also in English.

Hyderabad (A.P.)
January 1995

K.Balagopal
PERSPECTIVES
Social Sciences/Literature

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Remembering Balagopal

Who is ***ONE*** among us

Who ***INSPIRED*** us all

G. Haragopal VS Prasad D. NarasimhaReddy RK

P E R S P E C T I V E S

Introduction

These six essays written by Balagopal stretching over a period of two decades are penned at different points of time but one running theme in all the essays has been the interconnection between personality, politics and the larger changing socio-economic structure. Although Balagopal was a trained mathematician, he was a very keen observer of social processes not as a behaviouralist or speculative social scientist removed from hard and harsh social realities. He was, like Marx, a social scientist in its most comprehensive sense. The fact that he combined in himself a mathematician, historian, social analyst, a literary critique, a first rate people's lawyer, and above all an untiring activist bring him close to Marx and the Marxist formulation that 'action is accomplishment of knowledge and knowledge is fruit of action." Balagopal, in that sense, was an epitome of theory combined with action (praxis). These essays are a testimony to his unusual intellectual abilities to combine such theory and action, to the abstract from the concrete.

In every essay there is history, larger socio-economic context, unfolding reality and an assessment of the phenomenon from a people's perspective. The human concerns are so embedded in these essays it is difficult to discern his concerns from events or personalities. Balagopal had developed a fine dexterity of expressing his anger and anguish through satire or sarcasm. He would make a lighter observation as it may appear to be in form but hard hitting in its essence. These essays are also full of insights and flashes reflecting the brilliance of a mind that was endowed

with an exceptional ability to comprehend complex social phenomenon, a phenomenon manifest through profiles of political personalities who were seemingly shaping the history but essentially, Balagopal notes, distorting, if not devastating, social progress. When asked in an interview, he says his methodology was "to understand the changing world through the harsh realities of life."

The first of the six essays included in this volume titled 'A False Resurrection: Rise and Fall of Rama Rao' (1984) is a sharp reflection on one of the political events in 1984 when politics in the State of Andhra Pradesh was passing through a realignment of socio-economic forces. Balagopal, given his sense of history and sensitivity to the larger socio-economic system, captures the inner dynamics and traces the rise of Telugu Desam to a numerically small capitalist class that is forced to contend with a large mass of the rich and not very rich sections of the propertied classes, which are pushing upwards demanding a variety of considerations and concessions that the capitalist class is unprepared to give. This is the root of tensions that are besetting all the ruling class parties, including the birth of upstarts like the TDP, which keep sprouting now and then. This was propelled by powerful communities like Kammas who have been systematically kept out of power as a part of the Congress culture of keeping the economically dominant classes and communities in the States away from the seats of political power. India's economic and political development gave rise to undue pressure from the lower rungs of the society and the overall political structuring of power since 1947 did not accommodate these forces pushing upwards. The convergence of such forces is at the root of the rise of autonomous regional forces. Balagopal takes the analysis to a very high theoretical level when he observes, "the sociological origin of a phenomenon does not exhaust its meaning and significance

… it attracts a wider constituency that was undirected, undecided or amorphous [that reaches out to it] because of the logic of its existence, and some because of the mere fact of its existence." These factors paved the way to a significant shift in the social base of power and the rise of a regional party.

Balagopal differs from the dominant characterization of these forces as rise of regionalism and says, "to describe this combination of forces and aspirations as illusions of 'regionalism' is one of the inanities of two- penny journalism." He asserts that "this is not a rising force of Indian politics but a rising obfuscation of Indian politics. The description regionalism hides more than reveals." He caustically remarks "the journalist picks up the idiom, the ideologue adorns it with statistics, and the metropolitan builds his analysis around it, because regionalism scares him so much he would rather presume the worst than the risk of being surprised by it." However, Balagopal concedes the role of subjective forces when he describes NTR as idiosyncratic, but conceptualizes it citing Trotsky that "History progresses through natural selection of accidents" and adds, "history finds its path by filtering out of this deviant noise. But the processing of filtering out is prolonged, usually painful, sometimes amusing but always educative."

In an extremely illuminating article on Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Balagopal does not talk of Indira Gandhi the person but the larger socio–economic forces that shaped Mrs. Gandhi's style and approach and the role she played in Indian politics. Getting into the debate on the role of human agency in shaping history or history determining the role of personality, Balagopal observes "No ruling class ever builds the nation except as a (not incidental but essential) byproduct of the processing of enriching itself. And its history, which willy–nilly becomes a part of the core of the nation's history, is told not in any terms of any presumed compact

it has made with destiny, but in terms of contradictions inherent in the process of enriching itself. And it is within this history that the role of any individual needs to be located, and not in sententious moralisms of faith and betrayal". He traces the whole politico–economic process to the intertwined nature of Indian industrial and agrarian capital with the activist role of the State which provided capital and secured loyalty of the masses through a thinly spread welfarism.

The activist role of the State is grounded in an ideological structure whose components are socialism, self-reliance, modernization, liberal democracy and anti-imperialism. State enterprise is identified with socialism, import substitution with self-reliance, fertilizers with modernization, voting with liberal democracy, multi-lateral communalism with secularism and the ability to play the USSR against USA with anti-imperialism. This perception lasted through the fifties and sixties. By mid-sixties the crisis started becoming apparent. The structural weaknesses acted as a constraint and all the earlier beliefs about India cracking up as contradictions became sharper. It is breakdown of each belief system that accounts for the rise of Mrs. Gandhi and her centralized authoritarian style.

"Meham in Nandyal" (1991) deals with the election held in Nandyal of Kurnool district to get P.V Narasimha Rao, who was already occupying the office of the Prime Minister, elected. Balagopal observes: "the gangsterism his (P.V) party men exhibited in Kurnool the district headquarters during the nomination and his silent endorsement of their criminality would have destroyed his political reputation if either the political situation had been different or the critical instincts of our liberal intelligentsia been truly honest and impartial". These sections attacked Devilal's Meham in his elections as he represented the

rural rich but were silent in P.V. Narasimha Rao's case as he stood for the interests of the urban rich and middle classes. This is also because of the expectations of his class that "he will somehow perform the magic of cementing the fissures within the ruling classes that have grown to yawning proportions." "This has little resemblance to what knowledgeable people in Andhra believed about P.V. Narasimha Rao. His image as a leader is that he is indecisive, afraid to offend even rogues, accommodative of even scoundrels, lacking totally in assertiveness and so on." The media presented the image of P.V. as "cultured and a learned Brahmin and is above such things and it is the uncouth Reddy goons of Rayalaseema who are responsible for the gangsterism." The dependence or approval of what was happening in his election was largely on account of P.V. who "has never had a political base of his own even in his native district of Karimnagar and the only way he can survive is by depending on one faction or other of the warring gangs of landlords, contractors and real estate brokers that make up the Congress (I) in this State." This class of people did everything possible to get PV elected unopposed. They also apprehended that somebody may field a candidate and get him killed and countermand the elections. They also tried to reason out their preventing elections on the plea that there is a foreign hand to destabilize Indian political system. The entire fear was not from the main opposition party TDP but factionalism within the Congress party. And the Press which knew what was happening could not muster the courage to write about it.

Balagopal gives a precise blow by blow account of how persons were physically beaten up, lifted in jeeps and confined in hotels till the nomination period was over. In this pathetic drama, the way the collector, the police and the officialdom colluded highlights the subversion and subjugation of the organs of the State which supposedly protect the electoral process (which in turn has come to be believed as the substance of democracy).

"Politics as Property" (1995) analyses the political economy underpinning the toppling of N.T. Rama Rao by his son-in-law Chandrababu Naidu by providing an insight not only into the making of Naidu but the larger class forces that condition and direct the political processes. Balagopal traces this high family drama to Hindu coparcenary and observes "all property disputes among Hindu families carry an element of high drama. And castes such as the kammas, who are substantially propertied, have a community culture in which this drama is an understood and well elaborated element." He compares this palace politics of NTR being overthrown to early Telugu films in which "the dramatic denouement begins with the aging of a patriarch and is not uncommonly precipitated by his late infatuation with a young wife, a foster child or some such aberration that the heirs regard as senile delinquency. The patriarch is now a mellowed man evoking sympathy in onlookers." Balagopal compares the crisis to the property crisis of a Hindu joint family but in this case it is the family fighting for the State of Andhra Pradesh treating the whole State as their own property. Having internalized this culture, Balagopal observes that people, instead of getting outraged, find it amusing. The result: Chandrababu not only consolidated his power with the full support of the class that facilitated the overthrowing of his father-in-law but saw to it that he got elected in 1999 Assembly elections.

In the article "The Man and the Times" (1999) Balagopal not only analyses Chandrababu Naidu, but raises an interesting theoretical debate as the title of the paper promises. He says: "do the Times, so to speak, choose the right person, or does the right person latch on to the right Times is a hard one for a materialism that will not be vulgar; if it is at all necessary to use the word materialism, that is, when mere realism would perhaps suffice." He further observes: "that changed times produce changed ideas

and bring persons holding the ideas to positions of dominance in the various spheres of life is a matter of common experience, and appears to demonstrate decisively the simple proposition that ideas and their dominance are determined by 'material reality'; though the simple proposition reveals itself to be rather complex when one realizes that it is a sociological hypothesis rhetorically invested with the status of an epistemological truth." He adds: "but from the point of view of philosophical humanism the more interesting and intriguing question is this: since it is human beings who hold ideas (there being no other mode of existence of ideas that we may know of), and they hold them more or less intelligently, what exactly, in human terms, is the process by which ideas appropriate to the Times become dominant in the various spheres of life?"

Balagopal while attempting to find an answer to the above question maintains that there are two answers: "one is that persons with appropriate ideas (whether the ideas were there before, or they came into being in the course of the changes heralding the new Times) gravitate to the foci of power and influence by the action of some determinate forces let loose by (or rather, that constitute) the changed Times. The other answer would locate the subjectivity in the persons with the right ideas, who latch on to the right Times, indeed sight them in their incipience and participate in the process of bringing them to fruition, for their own purposes, whether individual or collective, magnanimous or malign."

He elaborates that the "two answers are in truth inseparable, though whether taken together they add up to the popular materialist dictum that social being determines social consciousness is a moot question." He adds: "Indeed that seemingly illuminating expression, if taken to express an epistemological statement, is

merely a tautological restatement of the basic premise of epistemological realism, that Consciousness is nothing other than Consciousness of Being, which means that it cannot but be determined by Being, provided one is careful enough to add the rider that this does not mean any straight forward reflection. Of course, the fundamental reformulation wrought by humanist ontology, which need not be and should not be otherwise inimical to epistemological realism, that Consciousness is not Consciousness of Being, but Conscious Being, robs the expression of even the tautological truth. For the same reason, one can no more interpret the expression sociologically, since when both Consciousness and Being are but notional facets of Conscious Being, there can be no Social Consciousness separate from or subsequent to Social Being to be determined by it."

It is at this level of analysis that Balagopal brings in the context in which Chandrababu Naidu took advantage and rose to the position he could and the context can be a "powerful material force such as the needs of 'Corporate Capitalism." He adds: "there will always be the possibility of evil surfacing strongly, taken along and magnified into the dominant social reality by a determined bunch of persons, or a whole identifiable social category, aggrieved for whatever reason or motivated by a desire for socially destructive choices dressed up of course in some grand rhetoric, for human beings can never be meanly mean, we must be grandly mean.." Balagopal raises yet another critical question which becomes central to his understanding of social phenomena. He maintains: "That we choose, and that we may choose evil as well as good, is the fundamental human reality, in whose modification the only thing that works is the human moral sense, not an eternal moral code interior to the species, but the moral potential, which takes concrete form in and through the current civilisational morality that is embodied in the institutions and norms, the structure and

the values, of that civilisation, which define, enable and limit it." And adds almost categorically that "Eternal vigilance, it appears, is the price of not only liberty but socialism as well; not vigilance against an external enemy about which Socialist minded people need not be told afresh for we have worked it into a paranoid trait at least since Bolshevik times, but about the human potential for evil within." This shift in his method of understanding of Marxism from class to atomistic individual needs deeper exploration. One can argue that this position of Balagopal is not the negation of Marxist method and worldview but an attempt to widen it so that class, social relations, material forces and individual human nature are seen together in their totality than as neat categories.

It is interesting and at some level amusing that Balagopal raised such serious questions in an article written on, of all the people, Chandrababu Naidu. Given the personal attributes of Naidu that he should become the blue eyed boy of corporate capitalism is something that Balagopal labored hard to grapple with. It is this enigma that made him seriously reflect on the methodological, philosophical questions to make sense of the unfolding political culture. That Chandrababu, who hails from a humble economic background combined with several negative attributes and values could be not only the choice of global capital but was projected as the most promising agent, was something that puzzled many who knew the formative years of Naidu. He latched on to the right Times and spoke the language of the World Bank but his body language and arrogance, Balagopal traces to the paradox of his class and caste. By class he was from a lower middle class background, but by caste he was from a powerful community. He observes "arrogance and insecurity born of unfulfilled assumptions of eminence, leading to either the bullying type who is a threat to the lower castes, the sycophant who hangs on to the rich of his caste inside and outside the village to bask in

the reflected importance, the ruthless go-getter who tramples on all in his search for what his caste has promised but his economic status has denied, or some combination of these uniformly uninviting traits." In Chandrababu "corporate capitalism found a person with no sympathy but contempt for the poor and self-centered and unsentimental types" and for them "the more insecure under the skin the better, for the more ruthless they will then be." This can be the explanation for rise of Narendra Modi who is fully backed by global media and imperialist corporate forces.

Chandrababu also fitted into the ethos of the class and caste who are engaged in ruthless acquisition of wealth. NT Rama Rao, who held the promise to the caste became a thorny problem because of his personal traits, had to be replaced and they found the 'Man of the Times'. Chandrababu projected himself as a CEO and efficient manager - the image the World Bank and the profiteering classes were fond of. He did everything that pleases these classes – "relaxation of prohibition on Indian Made Foreign Liquor, reduction in the subsidy given to the cheap rice scheme and power supplied to farmers, and a ruthlessly determined closure of a number of loss-making public sector and cooperative sector industries, is unmindful of viable proposals for revival", which earned the resentment of a sizable section of the population. Given the electoral compulsions he took up some populist steps which took him nowhere. This included taking governance to the doorsteps of people, Water Users Associations, and holding ministers and officers open to public criticism. Balagopal in his concluding observation notes "there is incongruity between the present Times as defined by the World Bank and other policy prescribers for the Third World, and expectations of social and economic democracy buttressed by the possibilities afforded by political democracy in India." In resolving the "two mutually

incongruous terms", he fears 'what kind of a cancerous body politic will be left behind'. He alerts that these are questions not to just contemplate on but that must lead to concrete action.

Balagopal analyzed Chandrababu Naidu after he was in power for one term as Chief Minister but wrote "Beyond Media Images" on Y.S. Rajashekar Reddy immediately after he assumed office of Chief Minister. He thought that it was necessary to caution society before it was too late. Explaining the defeat of Chandrababu, Balagopal notes that "a pervasive media creates a celebrity out of almost nothing and then calls experts to explain why its creation turned out to be nothing." He adds: "Chandrababu is merely an ambitious political schemer who managed to con quite a lot of intelligent people because he knows that their hunger for the image he has put on is too acute for the normal functioning of their other senses" and adds that "Beyond Media Images" is to introduce his successor . He fears if someone does not do it "a new myth could soon be in the making, and if the analysts of Left parties participate in its creation, as a homage to coalition politics, one may have to spend a lot of time disabusing the public of it."

Balagopal writes: "It is so easy to clothe Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, MBBS with the image of the good doctor who has turned to politics to cure society, that even without the help of such expertise, the media may itself involuntarily do so. Reforms with a human face, which appears to be the current slogan of the Congress, suits the image so well. The man is anything but a vendor of humane visages." He asserts that "his rise in politics has been accompanied by more bloodshed than that of any other politician in this State." "The recent elections may very well have meant many things in terms of popular aspirations, and one has no desire to be cynical on that score. But in the matter of the change of helmsmen, it has merely replaced a man who would find nothing

too crooked if it is in his political interest, with one who would find nothing too brutal. And for both, the goal is the same: Power." He further observes that: "such precisely are the men neo-liberalism wishes to find in power in countries such as ours which it wants to subordinate to its logic and interests." He adds: "Indian rulers irrespective of party have knowingly put themselves in a position where they have little leeway in matters of policy."

YSR's personality, Balagopal writes, should be understood in the context of Rayalaseema, a region known for its endemic factionalism. This political culture, a part of which was discussed in the piece on P.V. Narasimha Rao's election, shaped YSR and he in turn contributed in no less a way to the spread of this culture. This has also to be understood in the context of the region's economic backwardness which is rain-fed and the tanks and minor irrigation systems built during the period of Rayas which, thanks to Green Revolution, are in shambles as they are poorly maintained. This harsh economy coupled with factionalist culture inherited from the *polegars* created an unlawful society turning 'factionalist leaders' into a law unto themselves. These individual leaders gather a group of persons and establish their dominance and their writ alone runs. After introduction of Panchayat Raj, Balagopal observes "the brutalities of village factions acquired instrumental rationality". The methods used by them earlier were put to the more practical use of rigging polls and winning panchayat elections. The factional leaders would use violence and crime as their base and guarantee monopoly of local public works and civil contracts. YSR was one of the pioneers of this change which Balagopal notes "has terrorized and devastated the social and political life of Rayalaseema districts."

The rise of Raja Reddy, father of YSR, started when he brutally poured kerosene on a person and burnt him publicly. The brutality combined with the newly opened barytes mining at

a time when the price of barytes shot up when it was discovered that it has use in petroleum refining. It was during this time that YSR undertook transformation of village factions into full-fledged instruments of political and economic domination and became a center of unchallenged power. The result was that elections in Rayalseema meant "open violence on polling day to scare away voters and have the field open to bogus voting, taking away the ballot box to stuff it with ballot papers stamped elsewhere, preventing voters of the rival candidate from entering the polling stations, forcing the voters to show the stamped ballot papers" and so on. Balagopal compares this culture with that of Telangana which he says has a vibrant political climate that throws up activists close to the people.

YSR worked out his way carefully and set his sights high. While brute force served his purpose in the initial stages, he changed his methods eventually. He worked systematically towards this end and has succeeded. In the process, he has given the impression of being a man who cares for the classes neglected by Chandrababu Naidu's model of development. He promised heavy investment in major irrigation projects and free power to farmers. As for Telangana, Balagopal notes "YSR had made no secret of the fact that he has neither any understanding of nor sympathy for that cause." He adds, "There is little evidence that YSR is committed to a different view of these matters than Chandrababu." Balagopal emphatically maintains "the forces distorting India's economy to serve a variety of external interests inimical to those of the poor and needy, have not been content with prescribing any transparent economic policy imperatives at all to suit their ends." He adds: "Chandrababu was a willing collaborator in this, and YSR is not proof against it. The economic

philosophy ruling the world, namely that resources, opportunities and governmental assistance of all kinds are optimally distributed when they are put unreservedly at the service of those who can augment them with the most investment and generate from them the most income, is easily understood when it is plainly stated, and easily dissented from if one has the slightest conviction that progress should be everybody's progress, not at some unspecified date in the future, but with reasonable immediacy. But that policy prescription has not been content with such transparent debates. It has sought to work itself into our polity by opaque devices and has succeeded wherever it has found local collaborators among those in power. Those who believe that YSR will resist where Chandrababu was willing are fooling themselves."

This piece on YSR was written in 2004, immediately after he ascended to power. In the decade that followed, the politics in the State took quick turns and twists. YSR consolidated his power at the State level as he did earlier in Rayalaseema, and after the 2009 elections his power became unchallenged. His sudden death did create a void for the Congress party and it resulted in a struggle for power among the leaders of the Congress party and this included his son as a claimant for his seat and legacy. The agitation for Telangana State picked up momentum and the search for a successor to YSR remained unresolved. While the creation of a separate State of Telangana is becoming a reality, how the two new Telugu States would be governed is a moot question. The challenges of re-building a democratic polity which has been devastated by successive political leaders, in ways which Balagopal so graphically and so insightfully analyzed, remains a formidable challenge. At the national level, while Indira Gandhi dismantled or devitalized public institutions, due to PV being a willing collaborator of the global economic forces, all the institutions which matter are in deep crisis.

The political and institutional void that globalization caused created conditions which seem to be pushing fascist forces closer to State power. The rise of Modi without any pro-poor stand or any track record of welfarism is patronized by the media which is tied to the global capital in nexus with monopoly capital. Modi can successfully polarize social forces on any ground except economic. Modi's rise is also fully backed by the Sangh Parivar whose worldview is reactionary and backward looking. This time, therefore, it is not merely the re-enactment of authoritarian Mrs. Gandhi's style, but backed by a range of intolerant, organized anti-social forces entrenched in the womb of so-called civil society. It is at this turning point that India needs Balagopal and his penetrating intellect as a counterforce to protect, promote and defend democratic processes, institutions and values. He was opposed to these communal forces to a point of being contemptuous. We also miss Balagopal who was not an academic intellectual but an activist intellectual who made a difference to the theory and practice of democracy and contributed immensely to the enrichment of the form and content of peoples struggles engaged in the transformation of Indian social structure. This book, we hope, will help enliven the society in containing the aggressive march of fascist forces.

G.Haragopal
Perspectives

A False Resurrection

The Rise and Fall of Rama Rao

The trunk route from Madras to Calcutta passes through the four rich coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh—East and West Godavari, Guntur and Krishna. The scenery along the route is enchanting to the eyes, for it is green without end, not wildly green as it becomes further up in north coastal Orissa[1] and Bengal, but green in an orderly and disciplined way, as if nature hereabouts calculates the marginal cost of being that much more lush; it is green in a commercial way.

On either side of the route are villages laid end upon end, many of them really small towns; with neatly thatched and tiled houses, and quite a few good buildings, they do not seem to be part of this land of the wretched; but the pride of place is taken by the twin symbols of coastal Andhra: cinema halls that look like rice-mills and rice-mills that look like cinema halls, give or take a chimney stack. The resemblance will no doubt offend any decent architect, but it is true to its salt, for all the surplus that is generated by the delta agriculture goes in exactly two directions: agro-based industry and trade, and film production, distribution and exhibition.

This wealth resides in a class, a class that is predominantly (but by no means exclusively) Kamma by caste and agrarian in its

origins, which came of age in the period of the nationalist movement and the agrarian struggles against the Zamindars and the British Raj. These struggles that attended its birth have also given it the largest share of participation in radical movements; socialism, rationalism, atheism, communism, and radical humanism[2]—you name the heterodoxy and they have seen it. Over the period, they have also grown substantially rich, and have multiplied their riches since the Green Revolution. But while wealth has come their way, they have been systematically kept out of the prime seats of power at Hyderabad. They lost it symbolically when they had to concede the name *Visalandhra* (in favour of the Hindi-ised Andhra Pradesh[3]) for the State for which they fought the hardest, and had to simultaneously concede their demand for making Vijayawada the capital city: and they lost it substantially as part of the general 'Congress culture' of keeping the economically dominant classes and communities in the States away from the seats of political power.

The rise of NTR[4] and his Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is generally seen as the long overdue assertion of this class (usually further vulgarised as the rise of the Kamma caste). It is true that NTR and his most vociferous followers belong to this class, whether the main body in the coastal districts or the expatriates settled along the irrigation canals and around perennial tanks in Telangana and Rayalaseema; it is true also that most of his most ardent voters belong to these four districts; it is further true that the one man who almost single handedly led his campaign—Ramoji Rao[5], editor of the largest circulated Telugu daily *Eenadu* which functioned as a pamphlet for NTR both at the time of his election and during the recent crisis[6]—is a very typical representative of the pushing commercial enterprise of this class; but to stop there would be to read the story by halves.

It is generally recognised that the thirty-odd years of development of India have given rise to unforeseen stresses in

the lower rungs of society; what is equally true is that they have given rise to equally unforeseen stresses in the upper layers too. The monopoly capitalist class proper is numerically very small, and is forced to contend with a large mass of the rich and not very rich sections of the propertied classes (both urban and rural) which are pushing upwards, demanding a variety of concessions and considerations that it is unprepared to give. These classes find the arrangement structured since 1947 inadequate for their aspirations, and want a new deal which will allow them greater leeway. Whether it is in politics, planning or finance, they are no longer willing to accept what was unilaterally thrust on them as the 'national consensus' in the fifties, taking advantage both of their innocence and of the patriotic and socialist premium that conformity then carried with it. This is at the base of the serious tensions that are besetting all the ruling class parties, including the birth of upstarts like Telugu Desam Party that keep sprouting now and then. Most such tensions have their own individual origin and characteristics, but the sociological origin of a phenomenon does not exhaust its meaning and significance. The break occurs, and the phenomenon takes birth, at the point of maximum abrasion, but once it is born it attracts a wider constituency that was undirected, undecided or amorphous till then. Some reach out to it because of the logic of its existence, and some because of the mere fact of its existence. Part of the constituency, indeed, is created by the existence of this force it can look to, just as the consequent extension of the constituency acts upon the phenomenon and changes its character appropriately. The propertied classes of delta Andhra spawned and promoted NTR, but once in being (and more so in power) they had to share him with others whose aspirations found a real or imaginary point of intersection with theirs. And these others included not only many of the propertied classes of the other parts of the State who were dissatisfied with the existing arrangement of the economy and polity, but also the common people who were utterly disgusted

with the vulgar depravity of the Congress (I) leaders of the State and whose disgust, which remained unfocused for a long time, at last found a point it could collectively gravitate to, in this one man whom they all knew as well as if he lived in everybody's neighbourhood.

To describe this combination of forces and aspirations and illusions as 'regionalism' is one of the inanities of two-penny journalism. There is perhaps no more frequently repeated frivolity than the profound remark that "regionalism is a rising force in Indian politics". In reality, it is a rising obfuscation of Indian politics (which, of course, does not make it any the less serious). It is resorted to by hack columnists because its status as a popular banality makes serious analysis unnecessary; and as an ideology by a variety of political and economic forces for two reasons; one, since the monopoly capitalist class claims no region of the country for itself and is claimed by none, identification with the aspirations of a region becomes a convenient counter-point in challenging it; two, of all the paradigms of protest, it is regionalism that has the greatest legitimacy in the eyes of the ruling class; it does not carry the stigma that, say, communalism or casteism carry; that much has remained as a residue from the struggles of the fifties and sixties for linguistic States. Thus it happens that communal, casteist and plainly economic forces describe themselves in the 'regionalist' idiom, in terms of linguistic aspirations, devolution of power to the States, autonomy of the regions, etc. The journalist picks up the idiom, the ideologue adorns it with statistics, and the metropolitan intellectual builds his analysis around it, because regionalism scares him so much that he would much rather presume the worst than take the risk of being surprised by it. The upshot of all this is that from being merely acceptable, regionalism even becomes something of a fashion.

We therefore have NTR proclaiming to the world about the 'injury done to Telugu pride', and everybody taking it for

granted that such injury has indeed been done, and NTR represents the revival of Telugu nationalism against it. So much has been written about this revival that one is forced to stop and look around for it, and in vain does one do so. Telugu nationalism has had a rather long innings, from the first decade of this century till the end of the fifties, its dying embers were stoked by the agitation of the late sixties for a steel plant at Visakhapatnam[7], but by the end of the sixties it had died a natural death and there has been no reason for a revival since then; no more injury has been done to Telugus *qua* Telugus than to any other of the principal linguistic groups of India.

Thus it happens that, at the helm of a variety of interests, some narrowly economic, some democratic, but none 'regional' in any but a purely formal geographic sense, but shrouded in the fashionable ideology of 'regionalism', NTR came to power. No more was required of him than that he should ably serve these interests, and maintain the fashion. But there we should reckon with the man and his idiosyncrasies. Trotsky is supposed to have said that history progresses through the natural selection of accidents. As E H Carr[8] points out, Engels expressed much the same idea in the language of the vector mechanics of his days. In the jargon of modern science one would say that history finds its path by filtering out the deviant noise. But the process of filtering out of the noise is prolonged, usually painful, sometimes amusing, but always educative.

II

Populism was always the weakness of Hindu gods. Witness how freely they have their boons and how often that magnanimity got them into trouble. And NTR, having played those gods too often on the screen during his film career, had come to believe quite honestly that he *was* one of them. Add to this the fact that he is enormously rich (the minimal rumour is that he is worth Rs

50 crore, black money and white put together), which gives him a certain disdainful contempt for the petty rich and their petty graft, and the stage for populism is well set. This populism consists in fighting not so much the real enemies of the people as the most obvious and apparent enemies as perceived by the people—and these are the greedy clerk, the obstructive bureaucrat, the corrupt legislator, etc. It is worth describing a few of these bouts.

The first target of NTR's ire was the clerk, the State Government's Non-Gazetted Officer (NGO), to be precise. He lowered the government employees' age of retirement from 58 to 55, and when the NGOs went on strike against the measure, he unleashed a campaign of slander and vilification against them that surprised everybody. He was the *avatar* come down to earth to give succour and comfort to the masses, and here were the greedy clerks obstructing his divine mission. He raved and ranted against them in public meetings and on well-designed posters stuck on the walls all over the State, questioning rhetorically whether the government was to serve the six crore Andhras or the six lakh NGOs. Then came the turn of the corrupt among the bureaucrats, the legislators, and the assorted go-betweens who make a living and much more in the shady corridors of the State Secretariat. It is widely accepted that the organisation of corruption at these levels, which had been comprehensively systematised during Congress rule (especially the chief ministership of Chenna Reddy[9]), has received a hard blow at NTR's hands. But this statement must be read with care; it was not corruption that he vanquished, but the neat structure into which it had been organised during Congress rule. Corruption itself sprouted soon in a different corner, like the hyacinth weed that bedevils Hyderabad's Hussain Sagar[10]. Whatever his intentions, NTR has neither the imagination nor the mass base to really take on corruption. But in the meanwhile, he did manage to offend and alienate many of these operators, including his own legislators. What they could

not understand or forgive was this sudden rectitude on the part of a man who had made his life's fortune in the most corrupt of all worlds, a rectitude that much resembled the phony renunciation of the last leg of the Hindu life-cycle, *sannyasashrama,* whose garb NTR symbolically sported.

As part of this drive against corruption, he initiated the much-promised and much-heard about Lok Ayukta, and sat in that chair an ex-Chief Justice, ex-Vice-Chancellor, Radical Humanist intellectual with affiliations to Amnesty International[11]; needless to say, he is of NTR's region, class and community. But while we were all given to believe by Janataite rhetoric that the Lok Ayukta would be everyman's painless answer to bureaucratic corruption and nepotism, the reality turned out to be much less pleasant. The Lok Ayukta and Upa-Lok Ayukta Act lays down that only officials drawing a salary of Rs 1,150 or more per month come within the jurisdiction of the Act. This automatically puts out of the ring the tahsil clerk, the village bureaucracy, and the rural police inspector; in other words, at one stroke, the Lok Ayukta was made inaccessible and useless to about 70 per cent of the population. (When a complaint was made to the Lok Ayukta concerning torture in police lock-ups in Warangal district, it was returned with the comment that all the allegations are against head constables and sub-inspectors of police, who do not come within the purview of the Act—as if the Director General of Police would come down to the lock-ups and torture people.) The Act also says that when a complaint is given against an official to the Lok Ayukta, a copy of the same should be sent to the superior authorities over the official—whereas in reality it is essential that the complaint should be kept a secret at least until the preliminary enquiry is over, if harassment and victimisation are to be avoided. To top it off, there is the startling provision in the Act that if a complaint is found to be false, the complainant can be prosecuted.

Anyway, a moth-eaten Lok Ayukta is better than *none,* and the Telugu people got one. But NTR's flair for mythology and history was not satisfied with it. He resurrected Asoka's 2,300 year-old institution of *Dhamma Mahamatra*, and hung that mantle on yet another bureaucrat. But while the Mauryan original was expected to ensure compliance with dharma *suo moto,* so to say, this modern bureaucratic version was hedged about with suitable rules and regulations, and indeed it was not clear to anyone (least of all to the incumbents themselves) where the Lok Ayukta called off, and where the *Dhamma Mahamatra* began; anyway, once again, a moth-eaten *Dhamma Mahamatra* is better than none, and the Telugu people got one. But this bi-millennial resurrection, in a reversal of Marx's famous dictum, turned out to be first a farce and then a tragedy. The farce began soon enough, with the bureaucrats of the State questioning as one man the incumbent's moral authority to sit as Ombudsman, and the Lok Ayukta actually threatening to investigate the *Dhamma Mahamatra's* land-grabbing activities; and it ended tragically when the usurper Nadendla Bhaskara Rao[12] abolished the office unceremoniously and sent the dignitary packing. NTR, after his return, has prudently not attempted a 'Third Coming'.

Soon after these forays against corruption, NTR set his sights wider. The previous Congress regime, as part of its *quid pro quo* culture, had granted permission for a large number of private engineering colleges ('donation colleges' as they are called in popular parlance), which collect capitation fees ranging from Rs 25,000 to Rs one lakh from each student. The demand for them had been very vociferous from the propertied classes of coastal Andhra, who had all these years been sending their sons to far-off places in Karnataka to purchase their engineering education, thereby incurring an unpatriotic drain of Andhra wealth. In response to their demand, the Congress (I) government granted permission to 13 colleges in one year, and up they sprouted, one in Bapatla, one in Machilipatnam, two in Vijayawada, and so on

all along the coast; and the expatriates set up colleges in Warangal, Hyderabad and Cuddapah outside the coastal districts. Now, the people who demanded, established, and profited both from the product and the enterprise of these 'donation colleges' are part of the core of NTR's class base, and they probably expected that he would not touch them. They did not reckon with the possibility that he would take his populism that far and actually threaten to take over the colleges and ban the collection of capitation fees, in the name of fighting commercialisation of education, which is exactly what he tried to do. But he soon discovered that it is one thing to fight the clerks, and quite another thing to ban donations to engineering colleges, especially if the educational entrepreneurs manning them happen to be 'our own men'. He had to finally cave in half way and allow them many concessions like the promise of substantial financial grants, and the right to charge annual fees of Rs 5,000 *in lieu* of capitation fees, before he could effect his ban. Another comparable populist exploit was the attempt to impose an additional levy on rice-millers to obtain stocks for his scheme of supplying rice to the poor at Rs two a kg. The powerful lobby of rice-millers immediately went on strike, and reopened their shutters only after he granted them the fondest dream of rice-millers of Andhra: the permission to export a large part of the non-levy rice to neighbouring rice-hungry States like Tamil Nadu.

He also tried (this was another much publicised measure) to impose restrictions on the price of food items sold in hotels and restaurants, to bring them within the reach of the 'common man'. The hoteliers, another powerful lobby, also closed their shops in protest, and could be persuaded to reopen only after exempting the 'starred' hotels from the regulations, and allowing the others to sell two kinds of food; one they described as 'special', which was quality-wise the same as before, but now cost more; and the

other which they contemptuously dubbed 'Telugu Desam meals' which was of very poor quality, and cost the regulation price.

These and other comparable actions of NTR must have made his class-base a bit uncomfortable; not that they had lost anything but they certainly did not think it very amusing to have their own leader charge at them in unguarded moments. The most common comment heard from well-to-do people during the first months of NTR's rule was: 'one never knows what this man will do'. Nevertheless, they probably realised that if NTR is to stay in Hyderabad for long, such tilting at windmills must be suffered; for whatever political analysts may say about his film-glamour, in reality the people were not all that stupid.

But if these forays into bylanes were one thing, then NTR's fight with the Centre was another thing altogether. It does not matter how seriously he fought the Centre, what matters is that his class, his constituency, did not like the *principle* of confrontation with the Centre. What they wanted was a reshuffle and a new deal of the cards between them and the monopoly capitalist class, not a holy battle against centralisation of economic power. What they wanted was a bigger share of the national economic cake, and a suitable restructured model of the cake in the first place, not a rhetorical walk-out from the National Development Council. On this point, NTR was functioning at quite a different wave-length. It is not that the existing lopsided distribution of power between the Centre and the States hurt his democratic sentiments (he has none). One cannot understand the spirit of his opposition to Delhi in such modern and rational terms. Rather, what impels him is the sense—or nonsense—of the burden of historical and mythological tradition that continuously haunts him. In fighting Delhi, he probably sees himself as avenging the defeat of the Kakatiyas[13] at the hands of the Sultan of Delhi Alauddin Khilji[14] in the last years of the 13th century, an event that signifies, in the prevalent mythology of Andhra history, the beginning of the

enslavement of the Telugu people by Delhi and its Deccan agents. The mundane concerns of the other chief ministers who walked out along with him from the National Development Council are as nothing to him. That is the reason why he has gone farthest in opposing the Centre among all the parties espousing the cause of federalism. To give him his due, his was the one electoral party that categorically condemned the army action in Punjab, not as a prudent after-thought as a consequence of the angry reaction of the Sikhs (the kind of electoral prudence that affected most of the Opposition parties, ranging from the Communists to the BJP), but on the very morrow of the army action.

It is here that he was out of tune with the section of the propertied classes of the State that perceived him as *their* man, the man *they* had brought to power. For them, this crusade was diversionary and a waste of time if it was only a verbal one, and if it was meant seriously, then it was very definitely bad business. It was not *their* business, at any rate. And the one man who constantly harped on this point inside the Telugu Desam Party was Nadendla Bhaskara Rao.

Bhaskara Rao has been painted in the Press as an unscrupulous man who has changed loyalties umpteen times in his ambition to become chief minister; he is an opportunist who split the Telugu Desam Party at the behest of the Cong (I) to further his own ends; he made brazen attempts to buy MLAs to join his camp; and he is a ruthless man who engineered a terrible communal situation in Hyderabad on September 9, 1984, to impose curfew on the city and somehow prevent NTR from coming back to power. He is certainly all this, but he is also the one man within the Telugu Desam Party who stood firm as a true representative of the interests of the classes that brought NTR to power. In the manner of any egoistical *neta,* he personalised this symbolism, and claimed that it is 'I who brought NTR into the party and it is I who led him to victory'. And the one point on

which he stood fast, and which he never tired of telling anyone who would care to listen, was that this crusade against the Centre is 'bad business for us'. After he formed the breakaway faction of the party, it was 'no fight with the Centre' that he proclaimed as the one-point manifesto of his faction. He has insisted that it is this stand that represents the true interests of the Telugu people, and quite correctly, given what he means by 'the true interests of the Telugu people'. For more than a year, in vain, he tried to persuade NTR to see this point, and failing in that job he took it upon himself to be history's agent that would filter out the deviant noise of federalist rhetoric. With kindly help from Indira Gandhi and her minions he hoped to succeed, but history had one more trick up its sleeve.

There must be a lot of post-mortem soul-searching going on within the Congress (I) about who was primarily responsible for making a hash of the Andhra operation. Whatever the verdict, the fact stands that Ram Lal[15], then Governor of AP, was the instrument through which the mismanagement took place. He appears to have thought that toppling a government is as brazenly done as smuggling a timber truck past a Himalayan check-post. The consequence was a fierce public revulsion. By that time, in fact, many of the common people had lost much of their enthusiasm for NTR, and perhaps if the operation had been delayed by one year, NTR would have fallen under the weight of his own incongruity. This fact may surprise people living outside Andhra, who have been fed with the image of a prophet created for him by the kind of footloose democrat who goes around searching for a one-man alternative to Indira Gandhi; but it is true nevertheless, 'incongruous' is the one word that strikes any observer of his manner and his politics, and his very apparel symbolises this. He sports the *Shaivite vibhuti* on his forehead, wears yellow-coloured silk robes like a Buddhist monk of a prosperous

monastery, and created a sensation in the gossip columns by sporting a single ear-ring in one ear, and letting it be known that he wears a woman's sari as his night-dress. (The last two, apparently, are some kind of tantrik-inspired fads.)

The nature of the public revulsion is also quite instructive. It was in very few places that Telugu Desam leaders and cadre themselves participated in the movement to restore NTR to power. Most of them have little love for him, and would have perhaps defected to Bhaskara Rao's side if they followed their inclinations. They resented his arrogant treatment of them; they resented the fact that he would not let them peacefully make one per cent of the wealth he had amassed in films; and they resented the organisational domination of NTR's two sons-in-law over the party. There was more than a grain of truth in Bhaskara Rao's lament that all the MLAs would jump to his side if NTR released them from his camp and set them free, except that it was not NTR, but the public revulsion that stayed their feet. And this goes for not only the MLAs but most of the party's leaders and cadre. Therefore, they all sat resolutely on the fence, determined to watch out the show. It was not they who fought for NTR's restoration, but the so-called cadre-based opposition parties, the Communists and the BJP, who had at long last found some work to do, and the outraged common people. It was the Communists in the coastal districts, and the BJP in Telangana that led the bandhs, the rallies and the hunger-strikes; and in Rayalaseema[16] it was the common people who took spontaneously to the streets and protested violently against the dismissal of NTR. They selectively burnt and looted Central Government property, and the houses of MLAs who had defected to Bhaskara Rao's side. Twenty-five persons were killed in police firings, 23 in the Rayalaseema districts and two on the outskirts of Hyderabad city.

III

Unlike Jesus Christ, who rose on the third day, NTR's resurrection took one full month. That month must have been a period of agony and chastisement for him. Here he was, a messiah of the Telugu people, created specially by the gods to do noble deeds, forced to go around tending his fickle flock of 162 MLAs, exhibiting them to all and sundry and pleading that they *please* count the number and tell whether it was not more than half of 294. People were writing erudite articles about the Constitution and the role of the Governor, whereas as far as NTR could see, all that was needed was this little bit of arithmetic. But nobody would count them. Ram Lal, with the brazenness befitting an underworld operator, all but told him to go hell, and got him arrested by the police; Zail Singh[17] was more polite but instead of counting the number merely promised elliptically that he would do his best to save democracy (leaving NTR to guess whether that meant *he* would be saved); and the suave and much-lettered Shankar Dayal Sharma[18], who replaced Ram Lal as Governor of the State, pleaded for time and went to Tirupati to pray to the Lord. By this time NTR must have been a terribly frustrated man; here were 162 men and women, hard solid objective *facts* as any positivist could wish to see, and yet this slippery Brahmin at Raj Bhavan[19] wanted the help of God to safeguard the Constitution and Democracy, whereas the most that he needed was an abacus to count them. This period of 'constitutional crisis' in Andhra was in reality a very hilarious period, to those who could see the humour of it. Here was the most democratic and secular Constitution of the Third World, which could be saved only by God and 162 purchasable MLAs who had to be guarded at a summer resort against their own temptation.

In the end it was neither God nor the Constitution that saved NTR, but the violent and sustained popular reaction, which successfully kept the defections down to a minimum, and Indira

Gandhi's[20] opportunist handling of the situation. She has perhaps set a record in successfully playing a 'heads-I-win-tails-you-lose game.' NTR fell when she willed, and he did not rise again till she willed again—and he was made to see this humiliating fact. There has been much sensationalist speculation on the 'secret' agreement reached between him and Indira Gandhi, and many go-betweens have been suggested, including an ex-director of the CSIR[21]. Whether any such definite agreement has been reached or not, the fact remains that NTR has been taught his lesson, and has been allowed to ascend to the throne once again only after being cut down to the size that suits not only Indira Gandhi but, more importantly, 'his own people'. Hereafter, or so they expect, he will stop his sabre-rattling and behave as a responsible broker in getting them better terms with the Centre. It is NTR's personal tragedy that he could replace Bhaskara Rao only by becoming a replacement for him.

10-11-1984
EPW

Footnotes

1 Renamed Odissa in 2010.

2 Propounded by the Bengali Indian revolutionary Manabendra Nath Roy (1887-1954).

3 As a linguistic State Andhra Pradesh was formed on 1st November 1956.

4 N.T. Rama Rao, (1923-1996) a popular Telugu film actor turned politician formed the Telugu Desam Party in 1982 on the plank of 'Telugu pride' as against the culture of imposing Chief Ministers by the Congress (I) Party then in power at Delhi.

5 Media baron and founder of the *Eenadu* group, which today runs television channels in more than 10 provincial languages in India.

6 Known as the '1984 August Crisis', in which NTR was dethroned as Chief Minister by the Union Government with the help of the AP Governor.

7 The agitational cry for a steel plant in the coastal city of Visakhapatnam, the second largest city in the State, was '*Visaka Ukku Andhrula Hakku*' (A Steel Plant in Visakhapatnam is the right of Andhraites).

[8] E.H. Carr (1892-1982) was a left-wing British historian. He was well known for his book '*What is History'?*

[9] Marri Chenna Reddy (1919-1996). Hailing from a landed community in Telangana, he was twice Chief Minister of AP from 1978 to 1980 and from 1989 to 1990 but never served the full term of 5 years.

[10] A large lake in Hyderabad city, located close to the seat of power, the AP Secretariat.

[11] The reference here is to Yarlagadda Ranganayakulu.

[12] N. Bhaskar Rao replaced NTR as Chief Minister during the '1984 August Crisis'

[13] A historically significant regional dynasty that ruled most parts of what is now known as Andhra Pradesh from the town of Warangal during the period 1083-1323.

[14] Alauddin Khilji was considered the most powerful ruler of the Turko-Afghan dynasty who ruled large parts of the sub-continent from 1296-1316.

[15] Thakur Ram Lal was the Governor of Andhra Pradesh from 15 August 1983 to 29 August 1984.

[16] Region in AP consisting of the four districts of Chittoor, Kadapa, Kurnool and Anantapur.

[17] Giani Zail Singh, the President of India during 1982-1987.

[18] Later Vice-President and President of India during 1992-1997.

[19] Official residence of Governors of States in India.

[20] Indira Gandhi (1917 -1984), then Prime Minister of India.

[21] Council of Scientific and Industrial Research.

Indira Gandhi
An Attempt at a Political Appraisal

Understanding of Indian reality by the Left has been seriously burdened by an ideological albatross, that is the notion that the Indian ruling class is morally required to *build* the nation, as against merely making wealth for itself. Ever since the celebrated Tryst[1] that Nehru spoke of, Left analysts have been maintaining a balance sheet on behalf of the destiny, and periodically giving praise or bitter blame to the ruling classes according to the shape of the closing accounts. Some have even christened the ruling class the national bourgeoisie and have accepted its interests as the national consensus, its achievements as the nation's achievements, and its failures as the nation's failures. Others have not, but the peculiar prejudice that the ruling class *ought* to lead the country into its future remains strong with many on the Left. It is within this matrix that Nehru becomes many things - from the proponent of a liberal modernism to the hero of the nation, and Indira Gandhi uniformly its Judas. He is the builder of the nation's cherished institutions and she the treacherous destroyer of that wealth.

It is perhaps time, now that we are well into the second generation of our post-colonial existence, to set our sights right, and there is no better occasion for this exercise than Indira Gandhi's death[2], for the event has brought out this attitude in all its shallowness. All manner of unlikely persons expressed shock

and disbelief at the event and started counting their beads for the future of the nation. Whereas, certainly, of all the ways in which she might have died, this has been the least unlikely for many years now, and it required no astrologer to say so, nor much dialectical cerebration for that matter.

I

No ruling class ever *builds* the nation except as a (not incidental but essential) by-product of the process of enriching itself. And its history, which willy-nilly becomes part of the core of the nation's history, is told not in terms of any presumed compact it has made with destiny, but in terms of the contradictions inherent in the process of enriching itself. And it is within this history that the role of any individual is to be located, and not in sententious moralisms of faith and betrayal.

To begin at the beginning, the first problem that the Indian ruling class faced after taking over power from the British was two-fold. One, to build a viable polity that would hold together the diverse sections of the ruling class, and would attract the loyalty of the masses; two, to build the industrial and infrastructural base required for their enrichment. All the answers they found to these problems had as their instrument the State. *Etatism,* it has been recognised, is a major aspect of post-colonial Indian reality. Functioning as the mobiliser, the deficit creator, and the distributor of surplus wealth, the State has created the industrial and infrastructural base for enriching the propertied classes through import-substituting manufacture and technologically modernised agriculture. It has spread its tentacles far and wide and provides to the industrial entrepreneur a painless source of Capital; it is painless in many senses. State capital undertakes all the unprofitable investment in basic and infrastructural industries and supplies most of the products cheap to him; to undertake the investment it robs the poor and cadges on imperialism without taxing him too

painfully; it does not demand as a pre-condition that he cut off his debilitating links with imperialism (indeed the State itself is heavily dependent on foreign capital); and finally the State finances much of his enterprise through loans of public financial institutions without asking for a commensurate say in the running of the enterprise, a peculiar *etatist* fraud on the public that the Bombay High Court has recently declared to be not only proper but inviolable to boot in its judgment in the Swaraj Paul case.

To the rural gentry the State is equally munificent. The story of agrarian change in India since 1947 is quite complex. But the essential point is that with the abolition of *jagirs*[3] and hereditary *watans*[4] and the threat (more than the implementation) of tenancy reforms, the Indian village gradually settled down to its post-colonial shape. Some of the landlords hastily disposed of their land, but the recipients and the remnants, together with the bigger of the ex-tenants, soon settled down to coalesce into a very heterogeneous class of landlords. The State has helped the further development of the contours of this class. It has seen to it that no land-ceiling laws touch them except to impel them to sell off the less profitable of their acres; it has undertaken the infrastructural investment in irrigation and rural electrification to prepare the ground for the technological modernisation of this class; it has compensated for what they lost in social authority (as a consequence of the process of democratisation of rural India unleashed by peasant movements) by putting in their hands the financial and administrative paraphernalia of development (rural banks and co-operatives, panchayat raj institutions, etc); it has promptly dispatched the police and the paramilitary to their aid whenever their tenants or *bataidars* or labourers rebelled; and by and by it begged and borrowed from imperialism on their behalf and provided them with Green Revolution technology; it did all this without demanding that they give up their old habits of domination and old methods of exploitation; indeed, it has

reinforced these habits by reaching down to the gentry and strengthening their hands by putting itself at their disposal; where an enterprising rich peasantry has developed, it has soon enough acquired the habits and the culture of this gentry. It is a wrong notion that rural India is described as semi-feudal because there has not been enough change; it is semi-feudal also *because* of the nature of such change as has been there.

In this process, the State has turned out to be the single biggest Capitalist in India, with a single public institution like the LIC possessing assets worth five times that of the largest family of Indian monopolists. This State is simultaneously a parasite on society and an object for the parasitism of the propertied classes. Their wealth is deficient in that prime quality of genuine Capital, an autonomous capacity for self-expansion; instead, it can expand only on condition that the State allows it and helps it to expand. Not all the brave postures of shackled initiative that they are putting on these days can obscure this fact. This situation is well described by the Maoist concept of *bureaucrat* capital, but Indian analysts have unfortunately vulgarised that expression to mean the capital employed in the public sector. Indian capital, as such, is bureaucrat, that is to say it is a parasite on the State.

This is the State in one aspect, the State *vis-a-vis* the propertied classes. In its other aspect, the State has created the network of patronage that is the only real thread (the rest being illusory) that links the loyalty of the masses to the ruling classes. It is through the State that the ruling classes enrich themselves and it is through the State that they lay claim to the loyalty of the masses. Unlike early American ideology, which admired its pushing capitalists, Indian ideology does not even pretend to love its capitalists and landlords. If any obscure harijan or tribal ever expresses sentiments of loyalty to the system, that is only on the ground that 'it is the *sarkar* that gave me my pair of bullocks'; or half an acre of barely cultivable land, or whatever has been his lot.

Built around this structure is an ideology, whose components are socialism, self-reliance, modernisation, liberal democracy, secularism and anti-imperialism. State enterprise is identified with socialism, import substitution with self-reliance, fertilisers with modernisation, votes with liberal democracy, multilateral communalism with secularism, and the ability to play the USSR against the US with anti-imperialism. It is difficult to decide to what extent this ideology was genuine, in the sense of a false belief that is not *felt* to be false; perhaps, among many of the Left intellectuals who worked the hardest at its legitimisation, it *was* genuine, but among the rulers themselves it probably never was. But what is germane is that this structure and its ideology did have a certain capacity for achievement. A heavy industrial base was built and the capitalist class was enabled to accumulate and transform itself into its role as an industrial comprador class, the late imperialist counterpart of the trading comprador class of the colonial era. Irrigation projects were undertaken and the ground was partially cleared for the Green Revolution. Throughout the fifties and upto the mid-sixties the economy, and agricultural production as part of it, maintained a steady rate of growth, even at a rather low rate of investment. Capital and technology aid from the imperialists flowed optimistically into the country. And the value of the rupee remained steady. The people were kept patriotic and quiescent (which mean the same thing) by the distribution of 5 per cent of patronage and 95 per cent of expectations. The sheer size of the country and its undoubted cultural and material potential made its voice heard in the international arena; and the same factors also made the various sections of the propertied classes wait for their turn in expectation without indulging in too much of unseemly squabbling. True, they often played their dirty games, but not without a certain sense of shame. In a word all was, or seemed to be, well with the country. Only Kashmir and the North-East gave some trouble but this trouble was not a consequence of the internal political economy

of the land but was a legacy of the Transfer of Power from the British, and there was little protest in the land when unethical and brutal measures were employed to tackle these troubles.

At the risk of being taken to be deliberately provocative, it must be said that it was Nehru's good fortune that he ruled the country in this period. It is doubtful that an impartial history will judge Nehru to have been a great man. In history, the eminence of an individual is impossible to separate from the eminence of the Class he represents, and the eminence of a class can only be decided in terms of its urge to push to the maximum extent the limits of its objective possibilities. The Indian ruling class, even in the first decade and a half when it had some genuine achievements to its credit, exhibited no such urge. Like a petty *dalal,* it was content to balance its register each evening. But this is an aside.

II

It would be a vulgar (in the sense of non-dialectical) exercise to search for any date at which this peace was shattered. A social system should not be imaged as a tank that gets filled slowly up to its potential and then breaches one fine day. A social system has no predetermined boundaries, but only internal contradictions that explore and shape the boundaries as they work themselves out; the system discovers and simultaneously exposes its limitations as it develops itself. Sometimes, it realises its limitations by taking an extravagant jump and crashing into them. The Indian Green Revolution is a case in point.

It is generally agreed that the crisis of the system that was structured in the fifties started becoming apparent since the mid-sixties. The thesis of a secular deceleration of the Indian economy has been controverted, but the period from the mid-sixties till the proclamation of the Emergency[5] was a bad period for the economy. The growth of national income decelerated, the rate of investment dropped, the value of the rupee started falling

steadily, there were two years of drought followed by recession, and the foreigners were less forthcoming with aid. During the seventies there was much analysis of this gloomy picture. Most of the analysts focused attention on the *etatist* nature of the polity, or what is more properly described as the bureaucrat nature of Indian capital, and therefore sought answers in an analysis of the inability of the State to invest sufficient amounts of capital in a sufficiently rational manner. The answers obtained have varied over the years both in their politics and in the degree of optimism. In the beginning, they were pessimistic and focused, on class factors like massive poverty that severely constricts the internal market, or the consumer goods orientation of the sizeable private sector that immobilises precious capital, or the backward and unproductive nature of the subsidised and poorly taxed rural rich, and so on. But recently, given that the rate of investment has reached respectable levels and the economy is not only back to the 4 per cent rate of growth but has acquired a perceptibly modern pigmentation to boot, the answers tend to be less pessimistic and less political, focusing instead on structural inefficiencies and bottlenecks. For my purpose, which is a political analysis of the developments that made Indira Gandhi, it is not very important to know which of these is the correct answer, or to be depressed at the prospect of the deluge that is yet to come. Indeed, most of these answers are not answers but merely reformulations of the question in concrete economic terms.

At a very broad level, the cause of the crisis is that an economy that exhibits semi-feudal relations of exploitation over a large area and is dominated by a dependent bureaucrat capital, is incapable of developing rapidly and rationally. But to acknowledge this cause does not by itself suffice to explain the din and the bustle, the humour and the devilry, of Indian politics. The principal contradiction posits an abstract crisis; it is the logic of all the *real* crises that it manifests itself in. In the course of the constrained activity of real human beings, it takes the phenomenal

form of a series of real crises, each of which is potentially the last crisis, but none of which is preordained to be absolutely the last crisis. The nature and course of these real crises cannot be determined *a priori,* once and for all, they cannot be predicted by the principal contradiction, but have to be followed up by an analysis of the social activity of the various classes. Moreover, the crisis posited by the principal contradiction, being the abstract and overall crisis, is a crisis that focuses on failure, on the inability of the system to withstand its history. But no system ever slides linearly down into failure. Rather, the sequence of *real* crises within this crisis of failure are crises of success that get entangled in the contradictions of the system and either get resolved and lift the system to a new plateau or end in the final breakdown of the system. Every living organism must ultimately die. The contradiction between life and death, between growth and decay, must end in death and in decay. But no organism merely decays to its death. Its life is a series of crises, each of which is a crisis of *growth* that gets caught in its own contradictions. It is when Marxists do not realise this that they sound apocalyptic, and boringly so. It is the successes within the failure, the development within the underdevelopment, the 'crisis within the crisis', that constitute the stuff of the dynamics of a society.

What started in the mid-sixties was the first real crisis the principal contradiction of the Indian political economy manifested itself in. In the first decade after the takeover of power from the British, a certain structure was built and a certain set of relations among the various sections of the propertied classes, between the State and those classes, and between the working masses and those classes, were determined. This structure was the form through which the productive forces were to be developed. It had a successful first innings, and the productive forces did develop up to a point. But starting with the mid-sixties the newly unleashed productive forces came to clash with the structure; with the ambitious jump forward taken through the Green Revolution, the

clash became a head-on collision. This 'crisis within the crisis' unleashed class conflicts in various forms. The working masses themselves, both consciously and unconsciously, perceived the crisis to be that of the overall system and rebelled against it; but the propertied classes, with their historical myopia, mistook the phenomenon for the essence and demanded a realignment of the structure, a redefinition of the relations of the propertied classes *vis-a-vis* each other, *vis-a-vis* the State and *vis-a-vis* the nation's wealth. Whereas the people asked for an end to the system of exploitation, the propertied classes wanted to scrap the Industrial Policy Resolution and the Agricultural Prices Commission. The crisis and reactions to it are best studied through three points of tension, corresponding to the three principal class groupings of the country, the monopoly capitalist class and the big bourgeoisie in general; the rural gentry and the closely linked provincial small bourgeoisie; and the mass of the working people, both urban and rural.

The first is linked with what some analysts have identified as the distinction between the early and the late phases of import-substitution. The early phase is the easy phase where local capital manages to displace imperialism in the manufacture of the (by then) traditional varieties of consumer goods, including (as in the case of a relatively strong capitalist class like that of India) consumer durables like motor cars. The late and difficult phase comes with the 'ambitious' desire to go in for the manufacture of more sophisticated designs and of capital goods. The attempt at import-substitution in this phase becomes so difficult that the illusion of self-reliance is torn away and it stands out as the essentially comprador relation that it is. To take the most obvious instance, in the first phase the Fiat car gets slowly indigenised through Premier India, but in the second phase Maruti is merely an auspicious Hindu prefix for the Japanese Suzuki. But what is important here is that there is no god-given or genuine technological obstacle to self-reliant transformation from the first

to the second phase. What is involved is that in the first phase the capitalist class (including the State) takes the bother to replace imperialist capital to some extent in its eagerness to convert itself into an industrial class, but once it has acquired a blast furnace of its own, then it is content to accumulate comprador capital on that basis. If some Left intellectuals mistook the first phase for anti-imperialist national-bourgeois development then that is entirely their private illusion.

This transition creates serious crises of all varieties. Self-reliance now becomes a shibboleth and a worn-out cliche. The scions and the paid hacks of the monopoly houses write stringent articles in the glossy periodicals that have come up in this period, deriding the outdated 'ideological' and unpragmatic notion of self-reliance. The public sector bureaucrat behaves with equal vehemence in rejecting 'ideology'. *Etatism* of the fifties too comes under attack. It is not that Capital has now ceased to be bureaucrat, but it merely wants a redefinition of the terms of the *etatism*. The State, to which was earlier relegated the duty of doing the heavy work of building an industrial base without thinking of profit, is now required to function more efficiently and to concentrate less on enterprise and more on finance, and on aid and technology brokerage with the imperialists. The State as entrepreneur therefore comes in for all manner of taunts and jibes, much to the irritation of the Nehruite Leftist who had taught himself to worship it as the womb of Indian socialism. But the Nehruite does have a point: it is astonishing how brazenly the champions of a class that cannot manufacture a lube of toothpaste efficiently, attack the public sector for not running the Railways on schedule. But the poor Nehruite is alone in his chagrin. Even within his cherished public sector, the fashionable trend is for giving up 'ideology' and accepting 'accountability', which is an ideological notion meaning profitability. Altogether, a vociferous demand for the opening up of the economy and the privatisation of the public sector piles up.

The second point of tension is the Green Revolution. Whether the Green Revolution has had any impact on Indian agriculture is a much debated question. The answer depends upon how one defines the term and what measure of its impact one uses. If it is defined as the employment of HYV[6] seeds and the attendant technology, and if its impact is measured by the increase in per-acre productivity, then the accepted answer has been that it has had no impact outside of Punjab and Haryana. But it is not clear why anyone other than the Planning Commission would be interested in such a narrow and distorted definition of the problem. If we define it broadly to mean agricultural modernisation that was initiated in the fifties through irrigation projects, rural co-operatives and rural electrification and culminated in the widespread use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and HYV seeds, and if we measure its impact, not by the imputed objective of increasing all-round productivity but the real objective of further enriching the rural rich, then the success has been quite significant. And if we distance ourselves further from the empiricism of statistical analysis by reckoning its success in terms of the appetite it has aroused in the rural rich (which is extremely relevant for political analysis), then its success has been quite phenomenal. Indeed, the fact that it has aroused considerable appetite that it cannot satisfy is the point where the contradiction between the development of the productive forces in agriculture and the way in which the economy has been structured (the crisis within the crisis) stands revealed. The fact of this incapacity of the system to keep its promises has gradually dawned on the rural gentry over the last ten to fifteen years. And given the capacity of this class to mobilise the rich and middle peasantry behind it, and given the close—though not necessarily amiable—connections it has with the provincial trader, entrepreneur, and professional class through ties of blood and commerce, the disaffection has rebounded with a resonance. If the resonance has not always been

very loud, that is because the propertied classes of India are scared of airing their grievances too loudly for fear of setting a bad example. But it has certainly made itself heard in the rapid decay of the political structure and the cultural ethos of the ruling classes. By about the mid-seventies the Indian State was faced with the disquieting prospect of the propertied classes turning unpatriotic. From Khalistan to the Shetkari Sanghatana to the Telugu Desam Party, the avowed ideals and the methods and the degree of disloyalty have varied immensely, but the disaffection is quite real.

The third point of tension needs no elaborate charting. The loyalty of the broad masses of the working people rested on the illusory basis of fat promises, and the thin real basis of State patronage, and both of them soon evaporated. It is to the credit of the Communists that even if they were initially duped by the illusion, they were at least the first to reflect the disillusionment. The split in the CPI in 1964 was essentially a consequence of this re-evaluation of the ruling class and the polity, and had nothing of essence to do with the youthful delinquencies of Dange[7] or the Sino-Soviet dispute. Added to this disillusionment were two other factors: the misery caused by the deepening economic crisis, and the fact that as State patronage to the rural rich increased, they became more and more oppressive. At the next step, it was Naxalbari that made this break resoundingly clear. Since that time, there have been widespread revolts of the rural poor in the plains and the tribals in the forests. Whereas the struggles in the plains have invariably been led by militant Left organisations, the tribal struggles have found a variety of leaders, including avowed Gandhians. The only reason one can see is that 'development' has devastated the lives of the tribals so much that almost any politics will be forced into struggles once it enters their midst. The average forest-dweller today consumes perhaps half of what his fore-fathers did half a century ago, and that is the stark truth.

III

It was not ordained anywhere that Lal Bahadur Shastri[8] should die prematurely, nor that the Congress Old Guard[9] should make a hash of the succession. In this sense (and only in this sense), it was an accident that Indira Gandhi was called upon to preside over this crisis more or less since its inception. Nothing else about her actions or her personality was accidental.

Indira Gandhi's career as Prime Minister is easily divided into two periods: the first is the period from her accession till the defeat at the hands of the Janata Party in 1977, while the second is the period from her return to power in 1980 till her death. This most obvious division is also the *objective* division, the line drawn by the objective historical process. In the first period, it was the economic crisis and the disaffection of the masses that were the main problems. The disaffection of the propertied classes was as yet very much incipient. Indeed, it was the Green Revolution and the further industrialisation of the economy, which were undertaken in this period with imperialist aid and advice as an answer to the economic crisis that would intensify and bring out the disaffection, even as they gave the polity the pigmentation of an industrial economy. But that was as yet in the future. For the present, none of the major political changes of the period was a consequence of a struggle within the ruling classes. Even the split in the Congress was no exception. It was the answer to two vital needs of the polity in the context of the economic crisis and the mass disaffection as indicated by Naxalbari and the poor performance of the Congress in the 1967 elections. The needs were that the State should tighten its reins further, and that it should turn populist. Indira Gandhi's manipulations achieved both aims. The successful war with Pakistan was an external factor that helped the process, but while it was an external factor, it was by no means an accidental godsend. Both the tightening of the reins of the State and the adoption of populist postures required greater

reliance on the Soviet Union, and that closeness was certainly an important factor in the Bangladesh war[10]. Not only did Indira Gandhi achieve these immediate aims, in a matter of half a decade she was quite successful in containing mass disaffection, and it appears now that she was even successful in pulling the economy out of the deceleration crisis. The tribal and peasant revolts in Naxalbari, Srikakulam and Bihar were brutally suppressed, and so were the more heterogeneous and essentially petty-bourgeois uprisings in Bihar and Gujarat. A suspension of the parliamentary democratic process was required to fulfil these objectives, and she suspended it without hesitation through the Emergency. A suspension of civil liberties was required, and she suspended them through MISA, through the widespread use of the Disturbed Areas Act in Andhra, and through the employment of murderous hoodlums in the streets of Calcutta. Brutal measures were called for, and brutal measures were adopted. More than a thousand persons were killed in the process in police firings and in faked 'encounters' in this period.

As said above, the disaffection of the propertied classes was very much incipient in the first period. They were only in this period beginning to experience the fact that the structure of yesterday was becoming a hindrance. At this stage, it was the objective duty of Indira Gandhi that she should stand by the structure; and since the structure was *etatist* and the disaffection came from the wealthy, this necessity merged neatly with the populism demanded for other reasons, and resulted in her fiercely anti-monopoly, anti-imperialist, and anti-landlord postures. There were further bouts of land reform laws, and pieces of legislation like the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA), 1973, and the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act, 1969, which are all to be understood both from the angle of populism and the need to preserve the specific structure of the polity against the incubatory disaffection of the rich who wanted a different

alignment of the structure. She herself never had any convictions other than the determination to do her job.

In the process of this more or less successful management of the crisis, many old values and habits and norms were upset. Cheating, double-dealing and falsehood entered the politics of the ruling classes in a big way. Left analysts, taking the cue from her bourgeois opponents, have irrationally blamed Indira Gandhi for this debasement. In reality, she was merely the most brazen exponent (this much must be granted to her personal critics) of the ethos of the period, which continues down to our day. The propertied classes are losing faith in their system, and consequently, their culture has been degenerating at a steady pace, and nobody and no sphere of life has been exempted from the taint. Well-meaning intellectuals—including quite a few Left intellectuals, who continue to exhibit an anachronistic nationalism as if this is still the 1930s—bewail this as the degeneration of 'our' culture, but it is not 'our' culture that is degenerating. For parallelly, there has been a remarkable regeneration of people's culture across the land, taking a variety of organisational forms, some militant Left and some vaguely progressive. It appears that when the people become unpatriotic they turn creative, but when propertied classes become unpatriotic they turn vulgar. And the more public the form of social consciousness the more blatant the vulgarity it exhibits. Since politics, the theatre and religion are the three most public of all the forms of social consciousness, it is in these spheres that the vulgarity of the ruling classes has been most evident. Small wonder that soon enough film stars, *babas* and political leaders started keeping happy company.

But this is anticipating. To get back to the narrative, the lifting of the Emergency revealed two disturbing facts. One, that the people's disaffection had by no means been suppressed, and two, that the disaffection of the propertied classes had burst out of

the womb. The period since the lifting of the Emergency till today has seen popular struggles that are widespread, militant and better organised than the struggles of the pre-Emergency period; and it has also seen a new phenomenon: quite open squabbling within the propertied classes, often taking mass forms that have confused the Left very badly. The propertied classes, from the monopoly capitalist class down to the small town commercial bourgeoisie and the rural gentry, are gearing for a realignment of the structure, a redefinition of its parameters, a solution to the 'crisis within the crisis', and they are also fighting among themselves because each one of them hopes to be in, or at least close to, the driver's seat when the new alignment takes shape. The best place to look for evidence of this phenomenon is the political and cultural superstructure. It is unfortunate that Marxist analysts, having taught themselves that the economy is primary, look for evidence of change in economic indices, as if history is written by regression equations. (Too many Marxist intellectuals being economists has been bad for Indian politics.) In times of class struggle—including intra-class struggle—it is the superstructure that becomes lively. When the drabbest hacks who write centre-page articles in the daily Press start producing scintillating prose, then that is a sure enough sign that something is cooking. (For a very recent example, the panic caused among the Indian monopolists by Swaraj Paul produced the best pieces of invective written by their scribes.)

The inability of the Janata Party to hold together is merely the inability of any one of these contending classes to take charge of the affairs and settle the 'crisis within the crisis' in its favour. In that period, the greatest fear of the urban bourgeoisie was that the rural gentry would take the lead. The fear received its justification in the aggressiveness of the gentry, which revealed itself in the open and uninhibited attacks on 'urban-oriented Nehruism' as well as the ruthlessness with which they mobilised their caste-fellows to assault the agricultural labourers in the Hindi-

speaking States. In turn, the fear of the urban bourgeoisie is evidenced by nothing better than the savageness with which their normally staid Press (which is usually called the National Press) attacked Charan Singh[11]. He has certainly been the most maligned of all Indian politicians. He is known to be incorruptible, an able administrator, and certainly he is the only bourgeois politician after Nehru with a well worked out and viable economic philosophy of his own. Indeed, in this matter he is perhaps a cut above Nehru, since he is his own Mahalanobis[12]. And yet he has been the target of savage attacks as an obscurantist (which he is not) and an opportunist (which they all are), especially during the short period when he was 'interim' Prime Minister of the country, by the grace of Sanjeeva Reddy[13], another *kisan,* as the gentry like to describe themselves.

Their own inability to settle the issue scared the ruling classes so much that they started looking for a saviour who would hold things together with a whip in the hand; within the confines of parliamentary politics, there was only one such saviour: Indira Gandhi. And the imperialists, both of the East and the West, were equally keen to put an end to the 'anarchy'. They knew well that however the structure was realigned it would continue to be comprador; what they wanted was a quick resolution one way or the other, or at least stability. These reasons themselves do not explain why Indira Gandhi was voted back to power in 1980, but it is certain that if she had not been, and if the vote had not put an end to the anarchy, some other—and not necessarily constitutional—way out would have been found.

But Indira Gandhi in her second innings was not the same as before. It is not that she had aged, but the conditions had changed. The people she could handle. She knew how to get their votes and she knew how to get them killed. She handled them in this period as in the first. She broke the back of the textile workers

of Bombay, and she broke the heads of the rebellious tribals in Central India, and the agrarian poor in Bihar and in Andhra. But the squabbling of the propertied classes was something she could not handle. The same squabbling that brought down the Janata Party now shifted into her party and took the form of the peculiar Congress phenomenon: Dissidence. After all, the change in government had not resolved the crisis; it had merely set up a new medium for its expression. And she did not know what to do. She threw out leaders, broke up Cabinets, dissolved Assemblies, and in desperation cried 'off with his head!' like another paranoid Queen. But nothing worked. Even less did she know what to do when the crisis took the form of new messiahs and mass movements outside of her party. She manoeuvred and she manipulated, she conferred and she dilly-dallied, she lied and she cheated, she sent in the army and she killed, but she could never come to terms with the phenomenon. Some of the squabbling classes she could satisfy to some extent. The devaluation of the public sector and the opening up of the economy are two stark shifts that she initiated as soon as she came back to power, and this has gone down well with most sections of the ruling classes, particularly the urban capitalists. As the *Indian Express* said editorially (March 5): "There is a consensus today that the economy needs to be opened up". From the fiery radical of the early seventies she was now the mature leader, who had no faith in 'isms', as the cliche goes. Indeed, the change was already perceptible in the Emergency period when she allowed her younger son[14] to slap her Communist fellow-travellers in the face, and she herself frequently talked of an 'Indian road', neither capitalist nor socialist, and contemptuously asked the Communists what they had achieved. But the change really got going after 1980. In this regard, the 'national consensus' of the fifties stands destroyed; but this change is no full resolution of the 'crisis within the crisis', as the same editorial goes on to lament, for a new national consensus of the exploiting classes has yet to emerge. The heterogeneity of the Indian exploiting classes makes this necessary

if the system is to get over its first crisis and move on to a higher plateau. And her failure to achieve the consensus, her failure to structure a new alignment of the relations of these classes that would once again win the system their loyalty, and once again set the proactive forces moving forward, in a word, her failure to provide room for the chickens of development that have come home to roost, was the failure of her career. It was this failure that finished her. One crisis after another led her down the ladder. Assam confused her, Andhra confounded her, and Punjab killed her.

IV

By the time of her death she had completed the destruction of the ideological overgrowth of the system. There is no more talk of socialism, which is declared to be alternatively un-Indian and outdated; as for land reforms, there is no more land to be distributed, as everybody knows; secularism she laid bare by making it a point to visit every temple, every dargah, every church and every gurdwara she found on her way, and even more blatantly by inciting Hindu communalism in Jammu and Muslim communalism in Assam; liberal democracy was buried by the forced charade of elections in Assam, and the incredibly undemocratic Terrorist Affected Areas Act, following upon the massacre in Amritsar (parenthetically, it is the final sign of the demise of the liberal intelligentsia of this land that such an Act is allowed to govern 15 million Punjabis without more than a murmur of protest elsewhere); anti-imperialism is a virtue that she herself regarded with a certain amount of contempt in her last days, though Moscow and its fellow-travellers continued to credit her with it.

This is what makes her son Rajiv Gandhi's task that much more difficult. The twin problems his mother faced remain before him. The break of the people with the system is by now complete.

They talk of it with nothing but contempt even as they queue up to vote. And the urgent need for a new national consensus of the exploiting classes is still to be satisfied. The first has no solution other than brute power, for populism has reached the point of nil marginal credibility. It will succeed so long as the armed might of the State (with the help of the Soviets and also the Americans, if need be) is superior to the collective strength of the masses. Once that point is passed, then that is that and there is nothing more to be done except sing requiem for the dead. But the second problem is susceptible of less tragic solutions, provided the right instruments can be devised, for all the instruments wrought in the past are in a shambles. Whether Rajiv Gandhi is capable of fabricating and using them is a moot point. Till now, his main asset has been the fact that Indian politicians, like race horses, are initially judged by their pedigree and only later by their track record. His pedigree is unexceptionable but such track record as is available to date can cause no joy to those who want to save the 'nation' from chaos. His election speeches have been characterised by a wooden monotony that stands in sharp contrast to the finesse demanded by the problem he faces. To put it in the language of 'Scientific Management' that he and his cronies are said to be partial to, the variables are too many, the constraints are too complex, the feasibility region is disconnected and the objective is unclear. It will require much more than a bright-eyed admiration for computers to handle the crisis. Whether he can succeed is the problem of the propertied classes, but if he fails that can create quite serious problems for the masses.

23-03-1985
EPW

Footnotes

[1] It refers to the famous 'tryst with destiny' speech on the midnight of 14-15 August 1947 by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

[2] She was assassinated by her own bodyguards at her official residency in New Delhi on 31 October 1984.

[3] *Jagirdars* are army chieftains who were granted small territory by the ruler for management of his army and providing services. Andhra Pradesh (Telangana Area) (Abolition of Jagirs) 1358 Fasli Act abolished *jagirs*.

[4] *Watandars* were chief agents through whom the State collected village revenue.

[5] Emergency in India was imposed on 25 June 1975 for a 21-month period when President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, upon advice by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a State of Emergency under Article 352 of the Indian Constitution, suspending elections and civil liberties.

[6] High Yielding Variety.

[7] Shripat Amrit Dange, popularly known as S.A. Dange (1899-1991), was a founding member of the Communist Party of India.

[8] Succeeded Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister of India in 1964. Died of a heart attack at Tashkent in the former USSR in 1966.

[9] After Nehru's death, a struggle ensued between the Congress Old Guard, also known as the Syndicate and younger elements of the party. Morarji Desai and Sanjeeva Reddy were part of the Old Guard.

[10] The Indo-Pak war of 1971 as a result of which Bangladesh was formed.

[11] Prime Minister of India (July 1979 - January 1980).

[12] P.C. Mahalanobis (1893-1972), a scientist and applied statistician. Founded the Indian Statistical Institute and as member of the Planning Commission contributed prominently to India's Five-Year Plans.

[13] President of India (1977-1982).

[14] Sanjay Gandhi (1946-1980). The man who orchestrated the excesses of the Emergency. He died in an air crash near Safdarjung Airport, New Delhi.

Meham In Nandyal

What Meham[1] did to Devi Lal[2] and his son-nothing much in a material sense, true, but quite a lot by way of a spoilt reputation—Nandyal[3] should, in all fairness, have done to P V Narasimha Rao[4] by now. The gangsterism his partymen exhibited at Kurnool, the district headquarters, during the nominations week (October 11 to 18) and his silent endorsement of their criminality would have destroyed his political reputation if either the political situation had been different or the critical instincts of our liberal intelligentsia been truly honest and impartial. The situation, however, is not different, and our vocal urban intelligentsia is vocal only about certain issues and certain people, Devi Lal—whatever his hunger for power and his lack of scruples—has stood for the interests of the rural rich, which makes his unscrupulousness an easy target for the urban intellectuals' moral outrage.

PV is different. He is the new consensus-man the Indian ruling classes have discovered. Everybody is hoping against hope that he will somehow perform the magic of cementing the fissures within the ruling classes that have grown to yawning proportions. They hoped Rajiv Gandhi[5] would do it but found to their disgust that he was too small-minded to even visualise the task; they then put all their hopes on V P Singh[6] and were happy to find some confirmation of their hopes in the beginning, which explains partly why they were all so angry with him when he brought up the

'divisive' Mandal Commission. And now, they are all looking to PV to do the job. Such is the miracle desperation can work that the image of PV created and publicised in the last few months has little resemblance to what the politically knowledgeable public in Andhra Pradesh knew him to be until he had the Prime Ministership thrust on him. He was a proverbially indecisive person, afraid to offend even rogues, accommodative of even scoundrels, lacking totally in assertiveness, and so on. That is what he was held to be, and indeed that is what he is. But the desperation of the ruling classes for a consensus-maker has transformed him into an elderly statesman, a cool, moderate, balanced, altogether very capable person. The absurdity of this image will dawn on them soon with another crisis of hope as happened with Rajiv Gandhi and V P Singh, but in the meanwhile, his reputation is a holy cow. And so the Press writes of Nandyal as if what happened there was just some more of the intimidation and violence that has attended all electioneering in recent years.

In Andhra Pradesh, there is a supplementary reason for the silence, a certain unstated feeling that at long last we have a Telugu man as Prime Minister—what if nobody among Telugu speaking people thought very highly of him till yesterday—and we should not spoil things for him by focusing disproportionately on petty things like abduction and assault of prospective candidates intending to contest against him. In any case, it is always possible to pretend that PV, cultured and reportedly the rather learned Brahmin that he is, is above such things and it is the uncouth Reddy goons of Rayalaseema who are responsible for the gangsterism. Nandyal, after all, has illustrious history. Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy of the Janata Party[7] was sent to Parliament from Nandyal in 1978 in an election in which all other seats in the State were swept by the Congress of Indira Gandhi. He won, not because the people of this corner of Rayalaseema reasoned differently from the rest of the State, but because the Reddy landlords of this region decided to get him elected come what

may, and did so by transporting in lorries all suspected Congress voters—Dalits, in particular—to the Nallamalai forest[8] of the Krishna River Valley, and keeping them there till the polling was over. Sanjeeva Reddy went on to become President of the Republic and played a role that matched in dubiousness the way he was elected to Parliament.

But it is no secret that the gangsterism this time round was sanctioned by Union Law Minister Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy and directed personally by his nephew Kothakota Prakash Reddy, one of the secretaries of the Pradesh Congress (I). And Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy would certainly not risk the Prime Minister's reputation without consulting or at least informing him. PV has never had a political base of his own even in his native district of Karimnagar and the only way he can survive is by depending on one faction or other of the warring gangs of landlords, contractors and real estate brokers that make up the Congress (I) in this State. If, this time, he has willingly put himself in the hands of the warlords of Rayalaseema, there is no doubt strong enough reason for that.

And the reason has started unfolding itself. The warlords decided that they would get PV elected unanimously from Nandyal. The Telugu Desam Party cooperated with them, ostensibly because Telugu pride dictated that a Telugu Prime Minister contesting to complete the formality of getting elected to Parliament should not be opposed; however, it is hinted at by those who know better that there is a more ignoble *quid pro quo* involved, pertaining to the business and real estate affairs of the TDP leaders. The CPI (M) ridiculed the TDP leaders' stand, but nevertheless decided not to set up a candidate. The CPI too followed suit. These two parties, for all their frequent expression of concern about democracy, have, in recent years, always been more concerned about not involving themselves in activity likely to destabilise the polity than any democratic principles. Only the BJP and two Marxist Leninist groups set up candidates to oppose

PV. And Mothkuru Narsimhulu, a Dalit MLA, who was elected to the Assembly as an Independent, also filed his nomination with the intention of campaigning about Chundur[9]. The Congress (I) leaders tried to 'reason' with these candidates and dissuade them from entering the contest but they were not willing to listen to this kind of 'reason'.

Apart from a feudal pique at any opposition to their decision to get the Prime Minister elected unopposed from their fiefdom, the warlords had another reason for being upset at the possibility of contest. That is their fear that somebody would get one of the opposing candidates murdered and get the election countermanded. Sudhakar Babu, chairman of Kurnool Municipality, who played the role of principal aide to APCC (I) secretary Prakash Reddy in the disgraceful drama of abducting the prospective candidates and keeping them in confinement till the nominations were closed, explained this fear in rather absurd terms to one of his astonished victims: "You know how certain foreign hands are intent on destabilising India; they killed Rajiv and now we are afraid they will kill one of you to get the election delayed and make it impossible for our PV to continue as Prime Minister."

But the foreign hand, assuming that there is one long enough to reach across the southern bank of the Nallamalai forest and get to Nandyal, would find lots of local competition. Cuddapah, the neighbouring Lok Sabha constituency (which is also going to polls this time), saw one Independent candidate murdered last time to prevent the very ambitious Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy from entering Parliament. Otherwise, he would perhaps have been one more addition to the already substantial community of Telugu Ministers in PV's government. The hand that did it, far from being foreign, was very much native, in fact very much Telugu. The TDP leaders, terribly frustrated at not being allowed by Congressmen to go around and campaign for their candidate,

picked on the most defenseless Independent candidate and murdered him to spite Rajasekhara Reddy. What happened thereafter was even more macabre. The TDP leaders hoped that the dead man would be discovered by the police and the elections countermanded, but it was the Congress (I) people who discovered the dead body. They hacked at the corpse's face with an axe to make it unrecognisable and pushed it deep into some bushes by the roadside. The TDP leaders panicked when they found no news of the candidate's death in the next day's papers and started making anonymous phone calls to Press reporters at Cuddapah about a corpse resembling such and such candidate having been seen at such and such place. The reporters, not wanting to offend Congressmen, who are incomparably stronger than the TDP in this region, refused to take the calls seriously unless the callers identified themselves. Finally, in an act of reckless desperation, TDP leader Tulasi Reddy himself rang up the reporters and asked them whether they had not heard about the corpse he had been hearing about. In the meanwhile, Rajasekhara Reddy rang up the reporters and told them without any preamble not to take rumours of corpses seriously since he had reason to believe that the corpses were unrecognisable. By this time, the police too heard the rumour, but were unwilling to take any decision, for, on the one hand Rajasekhara Reddy is one of the unanointed monarchs of Cuddapah district, and on the other he is the leading dissident in the State's Congress (I) and therefore a thorn in the flesh of Chief Minister Nedurumilli Janardhan Reddy. So, the local police safely conveyed the rumour to Hyderabad and sat back awaiting instructions. Janardhan Reddy, with the sharp instincts of a professional go-between, which is what he essentially is, saw a good chance to undo his rival. He sent an lG of police (also a Reddy from Cuddapah district, incidentally) to go and get the body identified and get the election countermanded, which he

did quite efficiently. Cuddapah was then graciously offered to PV as a safe seat by Rajasekhara Reddy but PV preferred, for reasons of his own, to be obliged to Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy rather than Rajasekhara Reddy, and so the sitting MP of Nandyal, one Gangula Pratap Reddy, was persuaded to resign and offer the seat to PV. Rajasekhara Reddy is trying again from Cuddapah.

Such is Rayalaseema, and that is why it sounds so fatuous to hear talk about 'foreign hands'. Indeed, if the Congressmen were worried only about foreign hands, they would not have indulged in precautionary gangsterism on this scale. It is the native hands that they are really worried about. Not the Telugu Desam Party this time, for the TDP has decided that it stands to gain nothing by obstructing PV, but the various contending Congress factions, which are willing to do anything to spite each other, unmindful of consequences. Congress gangsterism is such that they would not hesitate to precipitate a major crisis by getting the Nandyal poll countermanded if one or some of them felt threatened by the gain that is going to accrue to, say, Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy, by PV getting elected from Nandyal.

If this fear of Independent candidates getting murdered is the—so to speak—rational element underlying the gangsterism, the rest is typical warlord arrogance. 'We, the lords of Kurnool, led by the Union Law Minister, have unanimously agreed and brought the Prime Minister all the way to Nandyal to get properly elected and anointed, and how dare these petty people oppose our common desire?' These are the very words with which they berated the prospective contestants in their captivity; and they are sufficiently indifferent to the requirements of civilised appearance to express themselves in identical language to the Press.

Getting the PM Elected

And here is how they set about their task. PV filed his

nomination on October 10. From the 11th to the 18th, a gang of 50 to 60 goons camped permanently in the sprawling Collectorate complex at Kurnool, the district headquarters, where the nominations had to be filed. The camp was based in the premises of the district information and public relations office, but the gang swarmed all over the complex in search of their prey. Hand in glove with them were the police, who were present in equally large numbers and who put at their disposal the arms, the intelligence and the lawful authority they possessed. These unauthorised occupants of the premises made no attempt whatsoever to be inconspicuous. The District Collector and other revenue officials, all of whom are executive magistrates, have their offices in the complex, and could not but see the gang camping there, but they chose not to notice what they saw. Their standard reply to all criticism has been that they "received no written complaint from anyone about any unauthorised presence or unlawful activity on the premises". The gangsterism thus having been officially rendered invisible, there was nothing else to hinder it. All those who were suspected of trying to file nomination were abducted and kept hidden in a place called Madhavi Lodge, apparently owned by a relative of Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy. They were abused, in some cases beaten badly, and guarded by armed toughs until October 18, the last day for the filing of nominations. And there was no subterfuge in all this. The gang that camped in the Collectorate complex was personally led by a galaxy of Congress (I) leaders: APCC (I) general secretary, Prakash Reddy; Kurnool Municipal chairman, Sudhakar Babu; MLA from Pathikonda, Seshi Reddy; MLA from Kodumuru, Madangopal; former MLC, Raghuram Reddy; the MP who vacated the seat for the Prime Minister, Gangula Pratap Reddy; and Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy's son, also named Prakash Reddy. They were present on the spot and personally did most of the kidnapping and beating.

Hanumantha Reddy, one of the victims, is a senior lawyer from Atmakur, a taluk town at the edge of the Nallamala forest.

He is a lawyer with 15 years practice, and a political opponent of local MLA Budda Vengal Reddy of the Congress (I). Having been in and out of various non-Congress parties over a long period, he decided to contest against PV as an Independent this time (after the unnerving experience that followed, he has recently joined the BJP). On October 14, he went to Kurnool along with about 15 of his friends and followers to file his nomination. The gang tried to stop him but he evaded them and went into the Collectorate building. But when he tried to obtain the nomination forms he realised to his terrible frustration that he had not after all succeeded in evading his obstructers. He was sent running from one room to another. The officials were evidently acting in collusion with the Congress (I) goons, for all the prospective candidates had this experience of being made to run around from room to room for the papers and being abducted by the goons who lay in wait *en route*. Hanumantha Reddy was accosted by APCC (I) secretary Prakash Reddy in the office of the district revenue officer (who is an additional district magistrate). Prakash Reddy pulled him by his shirt collar. Some others joined Prakash Reddy, lifted up Hanumantha Reddy bodily, beat him with rifle butts and took him away. In the lawns outside, Hanumantha Reddy found all the other Congress (I) leaders sitting in chairs as if the premises were their personal piece of property. They asked him why he had entered the contest. When he said that he wanted to expose the problems of his taluk through the campaign, they told him impertinently that there were other ways of doing that. They suggested a meeting with Vengal Reddy to discuss the problems of his taluk, but he refused to meet the MLA. Then they suggested a meeting with a more respected and elderly Congressman.

Being in no position to assert his right to contest regardless of what anyone thought of it, he agreed to this absurd suggestion. But it was only a ploy to get him out of the Collectorate complex.

He was put in a jeep and taken straight to the lodge where all the victims were to be incarcerated. He was one of the first to be lodged there, but he soon had company. One was Sheelam Sanjeeva Reddy, president of an outfit called Rayalaseema Rythu Sangham, who had decided to contest the election to focus attention on the neglect of Rayalaseema by the Congress governments. He was accosted by a circle inspector of police opposite the Collectorate building on 15th October and handed over to the Congressmen who beat him up, put him in a jeep, and brought him to the lodge. Another prospective candidate was an astrologer from Kakinada who had decided to enter the contest as a protest against the non-inclusion of astrology as a teaching subject in our universities. The poor man had the kind of experience his stars perhaps never foretold. There was one more god-man: a teacher from Hyderabad by name Mastan Vali who was confined for three days in the Collectorate itself and was rescued by the BJP candidate's entourage; there was also one person from Gwalior whom the experience seems to have shocked into silence, for he has gone back after his release without saying a single word to any one; and a few others.

On the evening of the 16th the detainees were shifted to the house of a former vice-chairman of Kurnool Municipality, on the banks of the Handri river. From there they managed to escape on the night of 18th, the last date for the filing of nominations, after the captors had relaxed their vigil somewhat. Sanjeeva Reddy managed to reach Hyderabad in a lorry, and told the Press about his experience. That was when the sordid incidents became public knowledge. Hanumantha Reddy merely went back to Atmakur where he found that the Bar Association refused to condemn what had happened to him, and his friends only said 'you asked for it'. He does not dare to go to Kurnool to even attend the District Sessions Court, and has joined the BJP perhaps with the hope that the act will save him from further harassment.

The Press reporters of Kurnool knew what was happening but they could not muster the courage to write about it. Only one of them, an assistant reporter of *Eenadu,* a local youth by name Suryaprakash, decided to make an effort. Being a little audacious, he decided that he himself would file a nomination and report the consequences. He had a rather strange experience. He went to the Collectorate complex at 10 am on October 18. To file the nomination he had to obtain a certificate from the appropriate revenue official verifying his address which was in Kurnool town itself. Strangely, this turned out to be impossible. One official sent him to another, and the other told him the right man was on leave. He finally went to the Collector himself and asked him to kindly verify his place of residence from the voters list, but the Collector refused. His argument was that his duty was only to accept duly filled forms and not to help people fill them for that would amount to supporting the candidature! As Suryaprakash stood near the door of the Collector's room pleading with him, Sudhakar Babu, the Municipal Chairman, waiting outside the room hidden from the Collector's view, tried to grab the youth by the back of his shirt and pull him out. Suryaprakash pulled himself free and in the attempt nearly fell at the feet of the Collector, who pretended ably that nothing untoward was happening. Suryaprakash, by his own account, gave vent to his frustration in choice abuse aimed at the Collector and again demanded that he should be allowed to file his nomination unmolested. The Collector replied that if he got the right certificate from the right official the nomination would certainly be accepted, but he could in no way help if the prospective candidate dared not go out in search of the right official for fear of being abducted outside the door of the Collector's office. Suryaprakash sat out the whole day in the Collector's office and left after closing time, when he had no further reason to fear abduction, for that was the last day for nominations. Outside the Collector's office he met the Municipal

Chairman and asked him out of curiosity why they were so intent on preventing nominations. That was when Sudhakar Babu gave his speech about 'foreign hands'.

In allowing the RPI[10] and ML[11] candidates and the sitting MLA Narsimhulu to file their nominations, the gangsters were in part recognising their limitations but in part also they were not unduly perturbed because they felt these candidates could look after themselves and would not get killed. It was the Independents they were worried about, and come the evening of the 18th they were satisfied that they had safely abducted and hidden all the Independents. But they realised a couple of days later that they were mistaken. I. Koti Reddy, a High Court lawyer from Hyderabad, a close friend of TDP leader Upendra, who had been one of the Central government's legal advisers during the National Front government, had managed to file his nominations as an Independent. He had gone to Kurnool in the car of one Ravindranath Reddy, a notorious landlord of Mahbubnagar district, and BJP MLA from Alampur, who happened to be a close relative of his. At Kurnool, he went into the Collectorate along with the entourage of the BJP candidate and was mistaken by the gangsters for a 'dummy' candidate of the BJP. It was two days later that they realised their mistake, and they immediately took revenge.

On the evening of October 21, in the heart of Hyderabad city, a large number of Congress (I) goondas attacked Koti Reddy's son and smashed their car, shouting 'did your father think he was man enough to contest from Nandyal'? The son went to the police station at Kacheguda in the city to lodge a complaint. By the evening he found that he was being treated as a criminal and not a complainant. The police made out that the attack was a sequel to a brawl the youth was involved in some time ago and had nothing to do with the father's politics. They abused him for giving a false complaint. Father and son realised that in spite of all their

big connections they were up against the kind of shameless collusion that they did not have the stomach to fight. A week later, Koti Reddy announced that he was withdrawing from the contest at Nandyal.

That is how India's latest Prime Minister, the first from South India and all that, is entering Parliament.

16-11-1991

EPW

Footnotes

1 After Devi Lal became Deputy Prime Minister, his son Om Prakash Chautala succeeded him as Haryana Chief Minister and contested the Assembly by-election from Meham in 1990. The Election Commission called for re-polls twice in Meham following widespread booth-capturing and violence, including the planned murder of an Independent candidate and the death of nine people. Meham has since become a synonym for booth-capturing and poll rigging.

2 Devi Lal (1914-2001) was a farmers' leader, Chief Minister of Haryana, and Deputy Prime Minister of India.

3 Lok Sabha constituency in Kurnool district in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh.

4 PV Narasimha Rao (1921-2004), former Prime Minister of India from 1991 to 1996, the first PM from South India. He won the by-election from Nandyal with a record margin of 5 lakh votes, a win that was recorded in the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

5 Rajiv Gandhi (1944–1991) was India's youngest Prime Minister. He was assassinated by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam while electioneering at Sriperambadur in Tamil Nadu on May 21, 1991.

6 VP Singh (1931-2008). As Indian Prime Minister from December 1989 to November 1990, he took the decision to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission which fixed a quota for members of the Backward Classes in jobs in the public sector so as to redress caste discrimination.

7 An amalgam of political parties, it formed the first non-Congress government at the Centre in 1977.

[8] A section of the Eastern Ghats stretching primarily over the districts of Kurnool, Mahbubnagar, Guntur, Prakasam and Kadapa districts in AP.

[9] A village in Guntur district of AP where on August 6, 1991 eight Dalits were chased and massacred in broad daylight by a mob of Forward Caste Reddys and Telagas.

[10] Republican Party of India, has its roots in the Scheduled Castes Federation, founded by Dr B. R. Ambedkar.

[11] Marxist Leninist, as the various Naxalite political formations are sometimes referred to.

Politics as Property

All political happenings are not significant events. Whether the toppling of N T Rama Rao in his ripe old age by a coterie directed by his own sons-in-law and abetted by his own sons is an event of any significance is a point that needs discussion. It can no doubt be said that it happened at a time when the man least deserved it - which is not saying much, for he has at every point of time abundantly deserved it - and for a reason that carries no great conviction with the people at large. His dear wife[1] was said to have been an 'extra-Constitutional centre of authority', which means little because all authority in the Indian polity is in any case extra-Constitutional, even when it derives formal sanction from the Constitution. More to the point, the old man's son Harikrishna, who was a catalyst in the turbulence and has now become Minister for Transport in the son-in-law's[2] Cabinet, is as much an extra-Constitutional centre of authority as his much-maligned stepmother, inasmuch as he too has presumed to dictate the shape of political happenings in the State without ever having been elected to the Assembly by or in the name of the people, an act of anointment that is evidently accepted by common consent as a good enough entitlement for toppling, subverting or hijacking governments.

A Hindu coparcenary being what it is, all property disputes among Hindu families carry an element of high drama. And castes such as the Kammas, who are substantially propertied, have a

community culture in which this drama is an understood and well elaborated element. The early Telugu films, for instance, were in large measure nothing but the enactment of this familiar drama of peasant proprietor or landlord families on the screen, and NTR has acted in quite a few of them. In most such films the dramatic denouement begins with the aging of the patriarch, and is not uncommonly precipitated by his late infatuation with a young wife, a foster child or some such aberration that the heirs regard as senile delinquency. The fact that by that time the patriarch, whatever his past acts of despotic authority, is usually a mellowed man, a silver haired specimen of contrition, or at least of a certain desire to make up with all and sundry - including the Naxalites, in NTR's case - before quitting this world, generates a certain sneaking sympathy for him in the onlookers. And the heirs look even more villainous than they need to.

It was this drama of painful generational change in the property holdings of a Hindu joint family that Andhra Pradesh witnessed in the last couple of months. But what made it weird was that the property that the family was fighting over was the State of Andhra Pradesh, its people, politics, and wealth. This itself, perhaps, is its significance, for Andhra Pradesh is a State that prides itself on its radical history; it can justly boast of a significant political element that is radically critical of the existing and inherited order of things. That radical critique can also fairly claim that it has influenced people's perceptions and ways of looking at things in major measure. And yet the inadequacy of this history is such that a single family - no doubt a rather big and glamorous one - can fight over the State as its joint property, the way such families have fought over home and hearth for centuries in the feudal-patriarchal tradition. And the people at large, including the more politically sensitive among them, are not only not outraged but find it quite amusing; or else, what is even worse dismiss it as an irrelevant interlude in the grand progress of history.

But it is possible, perhaps, to seek other points of significance as well. Indeed, one can even 'rationalise' the events to reveal a hidden meaning, a rational order disguised by maverick accidents, an analytical practice that radical - especially much of Marxist - thinking has always been prone to. For instance, one may see in the rise and the crisis of the Telugu Desam Party the birth-pangs of a self-conscious regional bourgeoisie, its strategies of consolidation, and their crises. Such rationalisation is one of the most fascinating things about radical critiques, and contributes a lot to their enduring attraction notwithstanding repeated practical and predictive failures; but the fascination is in truth a distraction. Such a mode of analysis is faulty because what is filtered out in this process, and (to mix metaphors) thrown out like the peeled skin of a fruit is thereby surreptitiously rendered irrelevant and insignificant. It is usually not, a point that becomes unpleasantly evident when what is peeled off analytically to reveal the alleged rational core returns later - in real and not analytical time - to stick again to the fruit.

Let us try then to seek a significance of recent events in AP in as non-rationalising a way as possible. It is one thing to recognise order and causation where it exists, and to recognise human subjectivity in history; but quite another thing to seek the working out of a neat pattern of Reason acted out by social collectivities set up as historical subjects. All such thinking leads to overt or covert reification of history, which in turn leads to Utopian prescriptions for putting an end to such history. And all Utopias are anti-human, even the most humane of them. The human subject - both as an individual and as a collective - is too small to bear the heavy weight of Utopias. It can only be crushed by them. A non-utopian radicalism requires a non-rationalising mode of analysis; a mode of seeking truth, for truth must necessarily be sought, that will accept reason but will reject Reason, and will be adequately cautious in identifying patterns of orderliness and causation in history, keeping it always in mind

that the history is *human,* and therefore always carries with it a large quantity of contingency, in every sense of that term: finiteness, disharmony, incongruence, accident, whimsicality, and so on.

The birth of the Telugu Desam Party 13 years ago was the political consequence of at least two phenomena. One is the dissatisfaction felt by a certain section of Andhra's regional elite with the Congress Party's strategies in dealing with the aspirations for political power in the States and regions. Those sections of the regional landed-financial-commercial elite that possessed the advantage of substantial property, and cohesive homogeneity as well as a standing of social leadership within the caste system - such as the rich among the Kammas of coastal Andhra Pradesh - felt that they deserved more political power than the Congress was prepared to give them. The unwillingness of the Congress to bestow this power on them was due to many factors, which may not be susceptible to an ordering in terms of historical significance or decisiveness. One was the negative factor that the Congress Party, with its unitary vision of India, did not like strong and self-assertive elites to develop in the States, which in its language would lead to 'fissiparous tendencies'. There were, however, less negative reasons too. There was a felt need to accommodate the aspirations of backward regions and socially weak communities in the States by allowing their representatives, real or putative, to occupy positions of power. This meant that the most powerful regional elites would be to some extent sidelined, or at least forced to share power and glory with the less deserving. But this positive factor contained within it another negative factor, which has been emphasised by Ambedkarite analysts. This was that the Congress, especially at the level of national politics, was dominated by Brahmins, whereas the upcoming regional rich were from Sudra communities, which was one reason why the Congress expressed a preference for a unitary structure of the polity, and encouraged the less dynamic of the Sudra communities, or those from

backward and undeveloped regions within the States. This process was also congruent with the sociological fact that in the backward and undeveloped regions, the unity between the Brahmin and Sudra elites as the principal exploiting groups of pre-modern India has not been fully shattered, whereas in the developed regions, that unity had been breached even by 1947, for both economic and political-cultural reasons. In Andhra Pradesh Congress politics, for instance, the Brahmin leadership has had a more or less cosy relation with the Reddy landlords of Rayalaseema and Telangana, whereas in coastal Andhra the Kamma community's rise, in social and political terms, took place in an anti-Brahmin ambience, represented explicitly by non-Brahmin Self-Respect[3] type of movements, and implicitly by the Rationalist, Atheist and Communist movements. It was this Kamma community that developed a very able and talented middle class and a powerful entrepreneurial elite taking advantage of the positive material conditions prevalent in the region watered by the Krishna and Godavari rivers, which conditions became even better after the Green Revolution. And yet, the rise to political power of this elite commensurate with its tremendous dynamism was blocked by Congress strategies.

While the resentment against this denial was one powerful mood behind the formation of the Telugu Desam Party, there was another whose contours have become clearer now than they were at that time. Whatever may have been true in 1947, by the 1980s, all the States of India, considered as ethnic-linguistic regions, had developed an elite quite capable of taking charge of the affairs of the region. Today, there is little doubt that they can fully take command of their regions and rule them as ably as Delhi is able to rule India. A person like Chandrababu Naidu, the latest Chief Minister of AP, is equal to anybody in Delhi, whether in running an efficient administration, amassing unlawful wealth, or cutting his opponents' throats. He and his class do not need to be overseen by Delhi in doing their job. They have nothing left to

learn - in administration, commerce or criminality - from Delhi. India is today certainly ripe for federalisation, for this, if for no other nobler reason. And if a morally desirable end is actually realised through not so noble pressures, then that would not be the first time it has happened in human history, nor is it going to be the last time.

This pressure of impatience felt by well grown regional elites has been expressed in political language in the idiom of decentralisation, autonomy, federalism, etc. If it is true that these expressions are not to be taken literally as the actual aspirations of all those who talk in terms of them, then it is also true that they are not to be understood as mere ideology, in the sense of either a distorted representation of reality or, worse still, a camouflage for hidden material interests. The notions are just what they are: the values in terms of which actual aspirations are conceived, thought of and explained, following the general principle that in human thought every particular idea or aspiration is conceived of and expressed in terms of universal values. In other words, that the cognitive and the normative are inseparable in human thought, for human beings cannot make sense of their existence without making moral sense of it. Ideological camouflage is not ruled out here, but that is no more the essence of the matter than the naive equation of values with actual aspirations. What is involved here is a structural property of human thought, which naturally operates in a social context.

Once such a universal value comes into existence, it is capable of being taken up and given fresh content in other aspirations; of being attached to or reinterpreted in other contexts so as to give rise to new aspirations, and energise hitherto dormant political practices; of becoming part of social culture that shapes human potential into actual behaviour patterns; and thence also of realising itself in social institutions, social relations and social practices beyond the intentions and aims of those in whose

aspirations it originally found normative expression. The notion of ideology, even when we grant that 'it is capable of influencing material reality', is not sufficient to comprehend this important historical process. This is not to say that the notion is entirely useless, provided it is used within the limited space of its utility.

The emergence of self-sufficient elite with the slogan of federation is frequently interpreted in terms of the rise of sub-nationalism or regional nationalism. Whether the interpretation is valid in a given case depends upon the details of that case, and the underlying rationalisation that ethnic upsurge is some sort of a law of the contemporary Third World, must be viewed with suspicion. As far as Andhra Pradesh is concerned, there has been no rise of 'nationalist' feeling parallel with the change that we have been describing, for there is, in general, no strong feeling of 'Telugu-ness' comparable with what one finds among the Tamils and the Bengalis (not to mention the Kashmiris).

But whether or not an emergent regional nationalism has coincided in all regions of the country with the rise of self-assertive elites, there is one other change which has taken place. This is an urge that goes beyond the ruling class of the region and well into the middle class, to create a fully-fledged modern community, a well rounded civil and political society in the regions, by structuring the necessary institutions, conventions and norms. One may call this a process of the nation in the making, if there were a nation in the making. It cannot be assumed to be there, merely because this urge is there. But even without the self-conscious notion of a 'nation' (with all the implied desires of a distinct destiny and identity), there can be an emergent desire for a coherently structured modern society with functioning institutions and respectable norms of public life, which is both desirable in itself (and actually desired by many in the developing community), and a precondition for the legitimacy of the governance of the region's elite. The unitary character of the Indian State, coupled with its

gradual criminalization, has left much to be desired in this matter. A strong desire to set this right and to shape a full-fledged modern society in which every conscious member of the community may take pride, and over which the regional elite may legitimately rule, is a strongly felt idea that comes through very vocally in the regional Press, academic writings and literature. In Andhra Pradesh, its strongest and most self-conscious representative has been the daily newspaper *Eenadu*[4] which silently prided itself on having brought N.T. Rama Rao to power in the first instance for this very end, and which is now no longer even very silent in claiming credit for having forced his replacement by his son-in-law, again to the same end.

Eenadu has not merely reported, but has taken a political stand while reporting all major public issues concerning Andhra Pradesh in recent years. Here are two instances where its purpose coincided with larger democratic aspirations: The paper, over the last two years, has made it impossible for any government ruling the State to continue the familiar Indian liquor policy of making people drink more and more so that the government may balance its budget. The paper has also done much to put the searchlight on warlord violence in the Rayalaseema districts, and create a reaction of disgust in the ordinary reader. The plaint of the warlord politicians of Rayalaseema that their region's profile has been deliberately maligned by a coastal Andhra Pradesh testifies to its success in creating revulsion.

Both these campaigns no doubt hurt the Congress, and can easily be interpreted as part of that paper's anti-Congress politics, as they frequently are. But going beyond that, both these campaigns have contributed to a certain cleansing of public life in the State, which made them attractive to the public at large, and contributed to the regional elite's aspiration for a self-respecting civil and political society for it to rule over. NTR was not slow in picking up the cue. He was not very consistent in the

matter of the political violence of Rayalaseema, for that violence has always been loyal only to power and not to any party, and NTR was not above the temptation of co-opting it instead of vanquishing it. In any case, for politicians of the present generation, the Cuddapah and Kurnool model of democracy through bombs and guns offers a tempting alternative to the tedious business of cajoling an increasingly cynical electorate. But on liquor, NTR did not hesitate beyond the first couple of weeks. He loudly set himself up as the saviour of the agitating women.

However, the social urge represented by *Eenadu's* politics goes beyond this. It demands economic and industrial modernisation and development. And for that, it demands efficient and quick acting governance of the type that has made men like Pratap Singh Kairon[5] and Sharad Pawar[6] famous. It has heard of the Bombay-Ahmedabad industrial corridor and the throbbing entrepreneurial life of Punjab. The no-nonsense administrative efficiency that would appeal to local, national and multinational capital, and encourage them to transform Andhra Pradesh in like image, is a much prized thing in this view, which has acquired greater force and self-confidence in the era of Manmohan Singh. This requires, among other things, a certain mood of purposeful governance, quick decision making, and political balance. It is here that NTR is perceived, by *Eenadu* and the substantial segment of AP's elite that is like-minded with it, as having failed. This dissatisfaction of theirs has been evident from the beginning of his political career. Like all people driven by purposeful rationality, these men were upset by the whimsicality of NTR, who is on a perpetual honeymoon with his own godliness. But they put up with him until he went and got himself a wife to whose ambition he was willing to sacrifice even the stability of the party and government. The TDP has, over the years, struck a balance between the unquestioned charisma of its undisputed leader, and the organisational grip of the elder of his two politically active

sons-in-law. Within the terms set by this balance, the second rank leaders learnt to locate themselves, assess each other's standing and evaluate their respective chances of climbing up the ladder. This knowledge and the certainty that went with it made for whatever stability the TDP had, and it was this that was upset by Lakshmi Parvathi, NTR's second wife. A woman as greedy, as intelligent, as able and as ambitious as Chandrababu Naidu (and there was no third person in the party that could match either of them), she not only gave the son-in-law the jitters, but completely upset the structure of opportunities that everybody in the party understood and related themselves to, in her effort, as a late-coming aspirant for the successorship, to create a base for herself in the party. Naturally, the least valued men in the party gathered around her and entered the mansion of power 'through the kitchen' as Telugu papers contemptuously said. It is an interesting sidelight that she literally made the kitchen her headquarters. Indeed, the whole of Lakshmi Parvathi' s strategy has been built around symbols of wifeliness - the caring, cooking consort - which were meant to create acceptability for her politics by pretending to be what she was certainly not: a mere wife. But such is the unhappy lot of precocious individuals, who wish, for good or for bad, to grow out of socially given roles without questioning the roles and the attendant expectations.

The expectations, reinforced by a particularly vicious Press led by *Eenadu,* helped Chandrababu Naidu and the jittery party men who had gathered under his umbrella, frightened by the sudden shaking of the familiar earth beneath their feet. 1995 has been a year of elections in Andhra Pradesh. After the Assembly elections, the entire electoral process for the three-tier Panchayat Raj, the municipalities and the cooperative societies was gone through with. At each step, the TDP was shaken by conflicts over allotment of tickets, with Lakshmi Parvathi patronising candidates of her choice, who were mainly men who would otherwise not

have stood much chance of breaking through the established party network to get tickets for themselves. At the end, when all the elections were over, the party had come close to an irremediable division. It only required the coming together of the two discordant sons-in-law, blessed by a disloyal son, Harikrishna, and as soon as that unity was cemented, the legislature party split, and NTR was dethroned. He made an ass of himself by parking his favourite campaign van outside the hotel where the disloyal legislators were camping and inciting the policemen present - who had by that time guessed which way the wind blew - to drag the dissidents from out of the hotel and hand them over to his lawful custody, such being his notion of lawfulness. He later made a further ass of himself by demanding that the office of Governor must be abolished - though Krishna Kant had followed the procedure quite scrupulously - and that Chief Ministers must hereafter be elected directly like the President of the US so that they may be undisturbed in their whimsicality for five full years.

Throughout this terminal combat, *Eenadu* played a determined role by lampooning Lakshmi Parvathi's ambition, as if she was the first ambitious politician this State has seen. It made copious use of the patriarchal distrust of an ambitious woman who gets married to a wealthy and powerful old man whose brain is suspected to have gone soft of late. This is the acme of vampishness in a woman, and Lakshmi Parvathi was guilty of this. Nothing more was needed for a determined campaigner to damn her.

The ruthless campaign is matched by the man it has brought to power. Chandrababu Naidu is a cut-throat politician of current vintage. He is also ably suited for the role that *Eenadu* and the opinion it represents hope he will play. Like any man who was born in a four-acres-of-dry-land peasant family from backward Rayalaseema, and has made for himself umpteen crores by the time he is 40, he is abundantly endowed with what capitalism

calls enterprise. But going beyond making money for himself and his cronies, he claims the vision necessary to structure a modern capitalist society endowed with the characteristics required to reproduce itself as a matter of course. This, as we have said, is one vision that underlay the rise of the Telugu Desam Party. There is no inevitability of its success, and no ruse of Reason that will work for its success. All that we can say is that for the present it has the national and international climate in its favour, apart from whatever internal dynamism it has. But then that climate itself contains much that may ultimately disfavour or distort it to suit a different purpose. And the internal dynamism operates in a specifically Third World environment.

However, politics in AP has always provided space for other visions and other values that can inform the process of the formation of a modern society. These are values of equality, justice and welfare. Whether these values are realisable in the absolute sense or not, they can function as a counterpoint to the kind of vision that *Eenadu* and Chandrababu Naidu desire, and can drastically modify the outcome of the ongoing process of social transformation. It would have helped if the proponents of the alternative values understood the radical social model they visualise as a counterpoint in ideals rather than the next phase of an ordered History. But then, it is an aspect of unavoidable human contingency that we have to put up with radical baggage of the past as much as with the conservative muck.

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Footnotes

1 Lakshmi Parvathi, N.T. Rama Rao's second wife.

2 Refers to N. Chandrababu Naidu, who was Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh from 1995 to 2004.

[3] Founded in 1925 in Tamil Nadu by E.V. Ramasamy Naicker (popularly known as Periyar), the influential Self-Respect movement gave way to the Dravidian movement and led to 'backward' class non-Brahmins seeking and wresting political power.

[4] Meaning 'Today' in Telugu, *Eenadu* was launched in 1974 and is the largest circulated daily newspaper in Andhra Pradesh.

[5] Was Chief Minister of Punjab Province (then comprising Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh) from 1952 to 1964. He is sometimes referred to as 'father of modern Punjabi politics'. He was instrumental in setting up the Punjab Agricultural University which played a key role in the Green Revolution.

[6] A former Congressman, and an extremely wealthy and powerful leader from Maharashtra, Pawar founded the Nationalist Congress Party in 1999. He has held ministerial positions in several governments and is also into the lucrative business of cricket administration. He is presently the Union Agriculture Minister.

The Man and The Times

Do the Times, so to speak, choose the right person, or does the right person latch on to the right Times, is a hard question for a materialism that will not be vulgar; if it is at all necessary to use the word materialism, that is, when mere realism would perhaps suffice. (The word 'choose' is still ambiguous; it contains two meanings: that the processes let loose by the Times shape the person suitably, or that they pick up the pre-existing person).

That changed Times produce changed ideas and bring persons holding the ideas to positions of dominance in the various spheres of life is a matter of common experience, and appears to demonstrate decisively the simple proposition that ideas and their dominance are determined by 'material reality'; though the simple proposition reveals itself to be rather complex when one realises that it is a sociological hypothesis rhetorically invested with the status of an epistemological truth. Whichever way one sees it, a greater complexity is revealed the moment one tries to define the changed Times minus the changed ideas, to locate the changed reality at any point prior to the existence of ideas about it.

But from the point of view of philosophical humanism the more interesting and intriguing question is this: since it is human beings who hold ideas (there being no other mode of existence of ideas that we may know of), and they hold them more or less

intelligently, what exactly, in human terms, is the process by which ideas appropriate to the Times become dominant in the various spheres of life? The word dominance here need not necessarily be understood in a pejorative sense. It could mean: more often believed, more widely propagated, more aggressively expressed, invested with greater authoritative truth (or, in the alternative, with greater common sense), supported more by the State or other powerful forces, or any combination of these.

If one gives up the language of reification that makes the entity called the Times pick up the persons to suit its ideological needs, as rhetorical expression sometimes has it, there remain two answers. One is that persons with appropriate ideas (whether the ideas were there before, or they came into being in the course of the changes heralding the new Times) gravitate to the foci of power and influence by the action of some determinate forces let loose by (or rather, that constitute) the changed Times. The other answer would locate the subjectivity in the persons with the right ideas, who latch on to the right Times, indeed sight them in their incipience and participate in the process of bringing them to fruition, for their own purposes, whether individual or collective, magnanimous or malign.

The two answers are in truth inseparable, though whether taken together they add up to the popular materialist dictum that Social Being determines Social Consciousness, is a moot question. Indeed, that seemingly illuminating expression, if taken to express an epistemological statement, is merely a tautological restatement of the basic premise of epistemological realism, that Consciousness is nothing other than Consciousness of Being, which means that it cannot but be determined by Being, provided one is careful enough to add the rider that this does not mean any straight forward reflection. Of course, the fundamental reformulation wrought by humanist ontology, which need not be and should not be otherwise inimical to epistemological realism,

that Consciousness is not Consciousness of Being, but Conscious Being, robs the expression of even the tautological truth. For the same reason, one can no more interpret the expression sociologically, since when both Consciousness and Being are but notional facets of Conscious Being, there can be no Social Consciousness separate from or subsequent to Social Being to be determined by it.

One is then left with the two-sided truth expressed by the two artificially separated processes described above. In analysing changed Times and changed ideas, then, one has to concretely analyse the new forces that constitute the material or social (in the sense of social relations rather than human beings) aspect of the changed Times, and the persons with suitable ideas that the forces bring or push into the foci of power; and simultaneously, the persons with suitable ideas who identify changes (mature or incipient), sometimes perhaps not changes at all but only minor possibilities, latch on to them and ride to positions of power and importance even as they help bring the changes to fruition in the same movement. In a given instance it may well be that a powerful material force such as the needs of Corporate Capitalism dominates this two-sided process; equally, at other times, it may well be true that a dynamic group of persons, perhaps - but not necessarily - even a definable fraction of a class or some other sociological grouping, add with their strong ideas to an incipient material possibility the strength that it may not have had to become the dominant reality. Today, in the Third World, the former is perhaps more true, to such an extent that it appears to lend veracity to even crude materialism, but there is no reason to believe that it must always be so. It is arguable that the latter process is a more accurate description of the initial phase of Left-leaning or at least welfare-leaning policies of most Third World countries, notwithstanding that this difference has been rendered obscure by reductionist analysis. But that discussion is not the present subject.

One conclusion about future prospects that one may draw from these considerations is that for a humanist perspective, there is no such thing as a stable, sure, socialist phase of history, or a post-history of humankind, distinguishable in its eternally reproduced ethos of cooperation and sharing from a pre-history of mutual predation as Marx imagined in his more extravagant moods. There will always be the possibility of evil surfacing strongly, taken along and magnified into the dominant social reality by a determined bunch of persons, or a whole identifiable social category, aggrieved for whatever reason or motivated by a desire for socially destructive choices dressed up of course in some grand rhetoric, for human beings can never be meanly mean, we must be grandly mean. That we choose, and that we may choose evil as well as good, is the fundamental human reality, in whose modification the only thing that works is the human moral sense, not an eternal moral code interior to the species, but the moral potential, which takes concrete form in and through the current civilisational morality that is embodied in the institutions and norms, the structure and the values, of that civilisation, which define, enable and limit it. Eternal vigilance, it appears, is the price of not only liberty but socialism as well; not vigilance against an external enemy about which Socialist minded people need not be told afresh for we have worked it into a paranoid trait at least since Bolshevik times, but about the human potential for evil within.

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Chandrababu Naidu, the much lionised Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, was very much around before the World Bank took over the Indian economy. He was known to be an unprincipled political manipulator, otherwise described as an able party manager. His shifty eyes - described with accurately defamatory imagination, and subsequently retracted for that reason, as the looks of a thief at a cattle fair by his erstwhile

colleague in the Telugu Desam Party, Member of Parliament Renuka Choudhary - put off most people, but his talent at the kind of politics he chose was recognised and respected by those who respect such things. That Corporate Capitalism would at most recognise a country cousin in his cut throat ruthlessness and ability to cohabit easily with falsehood would perhaps have been conceded by an observer of those days, if at all such an observer thought of Corporate Capitalism in connection with such an unlikely creature as Babu, as Chandrababu Naidu is fondly known to such people as are fond of him, or wish to be thought so. But a country cousin is only a country cousin, and nobody in those days would have dreamt that he would become a blue-eyed boy of Corporate Capitalism one day.

His capacity to amass property at remarkable speed, otherwise described as entrepreneurial ability or business acumen, was also known, and again respected by those who respect such things. He was, after all, born to a father who had but four acres of rain-fed land in a part of Rayalaseema where much of the land is rain-fed, that is, when there is rain at all to feed it, but according to his own recent 'declaration of assets', he owns property worth Rs four crores now. One is at liberty to multiply that figure by such factor as appeals to one's imagination, for he is no stickler for facts, and indeed it has been a favourite pastime of Congressmen over here ever since he made the declaration to guess at the right factor, and they have been coming up with a new number each day, more for their amusement than anybody's edification. But even Rs four crores from four acres of dry land in a not particularly fertile region - and that too shared among brothers - is an achievement that tells quite a lot about the man and his scruples. And yet nobody dreamt in those days that he would be talked about in the Business Capitals of the world, as we are told is happening now. Though, that perhaps merely shows that, influenced by the smooth and suave face of Corporate Capitalism, we do not often realise the strong affinity it has to the recognisably repulsive rural buccaneer.

He habitually speaks, whether in the Assembly or outside, in the terse and peremptory tones of a village bully, accompanied by the shaking of a threatening forefinger. That is perhaps put down to unease in speaking English when he is seen on TV by outsiders, but no, it is his manner of speech, which reflects a personality trait formed perhaps quite early in his youth from his upper caste lower middle class background, which meant he was one among the boys in the village, the school or the college, not alienated and set apart as a rich one would have been, but one of the boys and a natural leader by virtue of his caste, entitled to bully the boys around. It is not that the background automatically makes one a bully, but it gives the opportunity, and some of those given the opportunity choose. The same background gives other opportunities too, and some may elect those. Moreover, the opportunity is not presented from outside but is refracted through the particular personality. We are here close to the point where our explanation can no longer be merely social; it must necessarily also be moral and psychic. And after a while all explanation ceases and we can only record, though we can always dig a little more and try to explain a little more.

What human beings make, and what makes human beings are the two sides of the intertwined process of history. The first is observable, even if the authorship is often obscure and frequently contested, but the second can only be inferred or guessed at. All attempts to discover that which, in the first or final analysis, makes human beings, are bound to be futile because at the end it will always be qualified by the statement that firstly what makes me is refracted through the unique thing called I, and secondly by the fact that I choose. This applies not merely to external determinants such as production relations or class situation, but even the subjective determinant of productive human practice which is frequently set up as an adequate alternative to objective determinism, for it can no more completely explain human choice which belongs to the psychic and moral dimensions

of human existence as much as its practical dimension. A fuller ontology and a fuller anthropology than that of human practice is needed for that. Radical thinkers appear to baulk here because it would go against the utopian hopes about human possibilities that are the mainstay of radicalism, though a fuller humanism need not militate against all hope of progress, or even substantial progress.

But one can legitimately talk of influences and impacts that have effect on not only the choices we are faced with, and indeed the choices we often create for ourselves, but also our proclivity to make this choice or that. These influences are perhaps more useful to explain behaviour from hindsight than to predict anything, but even that is helpful for making sense of ourselves.

The totality of social culture embedded in the social structure is undoubtedly the strongest influence, given all the premises of an unabashed humanism. Chandrababu's father, as said already, was a poor - or let us say, a lower middle class - farmer, but he was from a dominant caste, the caste of Kammas. The caste was powerful in the village and the region, but this family was poor and resourceless. This class-caste category of poor upper castes, especially in a rural setting that gives it a tightly knit character held together by unrepentantly medieval assumptions of worth, exhibits certain unpleasant traits all over the country: arrogance and insecurity born of unfulfilled assumptions of eminence, leading to either the bullying type who is a threat to the lower castes, the sycophant who hangs on to the rich of his caste inside and outside the village to bask in the reflected importance, the ruthless go-getter who tramples on all in his search for what his caste has promised but his economic status has denied, or some combination of these uniformly uninviting traits. Of course, occasionally the same milieu has produced leaders of the poor who have put the caste-confidence that others lack at the service of the struggle against power that they know only too closely and

are in little awe of. But, the undeniable possibility of individual choice apart, any significant tendency in that direction would perhaps require that the social culture contains a tradition defined by the idiom of justice and equality. Chandrababu's native Chittoor district is sadly lacking in such a culture. The region has not been to any significant extent affected by the Communist, Rationalist and Reformist movements that had a salutary influence on the culture of the coastal Andhra districts to the north-east, in which it was the Kamma peasantry that participated more vigourously than any other single caste or community; nor did Chittoor, inspite of its contiguity with the Tamil country to the South, partake to any considerable extent of the non-Brahmin self-respect movement that had an equally salutary influence in those parts, especially on the upper Sudra castes comparable to the Kammas of the Telugu country.

Forsaken by social progress of either the Marxist or the Periyarist variety, the most likely type of poor Kamma youth from the district was the self-confident but simultaneously insecure seeker of power and property, prone to either physical violence or manipulative ruthlessness, devoid of any sentiment of sympathy for the poor and the weak, for he has been there and has nothing but contempt for those who remain there, even if they do not have his advantage of caste, indeed precisely because the wretches are so wretched that they do not have the advantage. It is an easily recognisable type, and a type - with all the myriad individual variations not only of actual worth but also emphasis in the angularities and degrees of scruples - that just suits the needs of a very different mode of life: Corporate Capitalism, which needs just such self-centred and unsentimental types, the more insecure under the skin the better, for the more ruthless they will then be.

But Chandrababu had still to grow up before he could be the blue-eyed boy of the corporate world. An overgrown country brat would not do. He, of course, was not at the beginning in

search of a place in New York's business magazines, but only power and money in whichever form and whatever kind. Today, he is sometimes described as a computer buff; he is certainly hooked to information technology, to the point of holding the unlikely belief that investment in that area can be the locomotive for the State's growth. But until recently his life exhibited no such hi-tech proclivities. Even if he had been born rich, he would in all probability have moved into the lucrative world of civil contracts rather than information technology, and then perhaps moved to politics from there, like the average Indian rural-based politician. As he was born poor, he had neither that option nor this; he could only enter politics.

He cut his teeth in campus politics in the small town university at Tirupati, at the foothills of Lord Venkateswara, or Balaji as the Marwaris fondly call Him. The university was (and still is) dominated by caste groupings of the dominant communities, overlaid with the proneness to factional violence characteristic of some of the hinterland areas of the university, such as Cuddapah district. Physical violence was not Chandrababu's forte. It pays little, and has an uncomfortably terminal character. He preferred to manoeuvre and manipulate from behind the scenes most of the time. Being a Kamma helped him a lot. The Kammas of Rayalaseema, unlike their cousins of the central coastal districts, have to contend with an equally strong, but numerically larger and violently inclined caste, the Reddys. Yet, being second to none in the non-Brahmin hierarchy, and in their self-perception more competent in any sphere of life than any, the Kammas of Rayalaseema see no reason why they should play second fiddle to the Reddys. And therefore any capable leader from that community would attract following. Other non-Reddy castes would also be inclined to follow such a leader. Both at the university and later outside the campus, Chandrababu used this advantage to the hilt. But he also used the image of an educated young man (he took

an M.A in Economics and apparently dabbled a bit in research of some sort before going on to higher things) as a foil to the old fogeys of the Reddy caste who till then dominated the district's politics.

A dynamic, educated young man to some and a Kamma leader to others, he rose fast in the politics of the district. Such of his friends as went behind him pulled by the idealism attached to the image of an educated modern young man fighting medieval fogeys cannot to this day forget the shock they received when they saw him making money from day one after he became MLA. He has never looked back after that. Some politicians are credited with some idealism in the initial years of their career, which they outgrow in due course and recall nostalgically on inebriated evenings thereafter. Chandrababu has never been accused of any such weakness.

But it cannot be said that he did not have a long term vision for the kind of Society he wanted this country to be. He did, and that is what makes him more than a half penny politician. Indeed, we would not be discussing him otherwise. That vision, predictably, was made up of notions of a high growth rate, technological modernity, unsentimental efficiency, and other notions that typically hang together. He was recognisably impatient with anything that was an obstacle to this; in particular, like all persons who hold the arrogant belief that they are 'self-made', as the expression goes, he was impatient with claims of social disadvantage or structural disabilities. Such people had only themselves to blame, really.

This type, of both person and point of view, is quite familiar. It is easily attributable to Capitalism, though such persons and such a point of view exist in all societies, as will be evident if one is not taken in too much by the notion that certain classes of ideas and certain types of personalities are exclusive to certain

societies. But the type is no doubt found more in societies that are Capitalist in their economic structure, for that system of production encourages such a view point, and persons whose personality is permeated with that view point. (That ideas are not held in the mind but through the personality is one of the great truths of psychoanalysis, which makes it inescapable that any epistemological discussion is really an exploration in the anthropology of ideas, and hence also that any theory of history must be humanist if it is to even begin to be true).

What is interesting about Indian society is the way this view point has risen to ascendance in society in the last decade or so. But, in hindsight, it appears that this ascendance, as far as Andhra Pradesh is concerned, was signified at least in part by the rise of the Telugu Desam Party. Impatience with the emphasis on welfare and concern for the disadvantaged that early on characterised the Indian polity shaped by the expectations of the social and political churning that we call the freedom struggle, is an attitude that has been hardening over the years in Indian society. The more that the hitherto disadvantaged assert themselves and demand changes in society, policy and the law, the more the resentment grows, and the more the impatience for jettisoning it grows. Much of recent Indian political history can be interpreted within these terms. The theoretical crisis of Socialism and the downfall of the States called Socialist has further philosophically emboldened this impatience, as much as the fact that the economic policies of yore found it difficult to cross a certain limit of growth.

It is not that there was no space within the Congress Party for this impatience; there was plenty. But a certain inertia is inevitable in any organisation as old as the Congress, and moreover there were too many in that party who had made a political career of representing the disadvantaged. Those who were impatient

for change were too impatient to wait. Later in the day, the rise to popularity of the Bharatiya Janata Party would signify the same change on a larger and much more destructive scale, but as far as Andhra Pradesh is concerned, it began as far back as 1982, with the birth of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). The fact was most clearly represented by *Eenadu*, the daily newspaper that truly represents the ethos of the social sections whose impatience led to the formation of the TDP. Chandrababu, the Manager (formally known as General Secretary) of the Party after he got over his initial hesitation and joined his father-in-law's party (he was already a Congress Minister by the time N.T. Rama Rao set up the TDP) also shared the ethos, though he did not let anyone perceive him as anything other than a (very able) Party Manager, not even letting people see his political ambition, until he decided to take charge of the Party to save it from its founder who, in his estimate, had turned senile. But even at this stage the time was not thought ripe to come out with the no-holds-barred philosophy of glorification of Corporate Capitalism, and denigration of Welfarist responsibilities of the State that characterise the policy dimension of the Indian Constitution as much as popular expectations.

The paradoxical situation of this section of society was that they needed a charismatic leader to put their interests in power, but wanted the leader to eschew the 'populism', wasteful and inefficient, that gave him the charisma, and be a hard-headed businessman-Chief Minister, of the type that Chandrababu now proudly declares himself to be. Such perfection not being attainable by mere human beings, they perforce had to put up with N.T. Rama Rao, his populism (grandiose self-image of a benevolent provider, in truth) and all. However, the growing impatience of *Eenadu*, the mouth-piece of this view-point, with the antics of N.T. Rama Rao, even as it steadfastly supported him against the Congress, reflects the tension inherent in this paradox quite well.

It is needless to go into the details of the methods by which this paradox was sought to be resolved, and the role played in this by matters like N.T. Rama Rao's infatuation with his second wife. (It is not clear that one can describe these matters as incidental or contingent, for that may be a hasty and untenable rationalisation of the change). What played a crucial role in the removal of the inefficient drag on the economy, deadwood literally, that the founder's ego-centric self-image as the grand provider of succour to the masses was by now perceived to have become, not only by the Family but by the crucial support base and international policy prescribers as well, was the bold decision of Chandrababu to step in as the replacement, to be the Man of the Times. The State shall not be the provider but only a facilitator, says the current ruling dogma. To realise itself, the dogma had to await the arrival of a determined facilitator to replace the grand provider. The Times had to wait for the Man. The Man with a personality shaped in an appropriate milieu, imbued with appropriate values to guide his choices, and the right kind of personal scruples or the lack thereof.

That is now in the past. The supporters, the advisors and the prescribers are all vocally delighted with the replacement of the charismatic but unwanted populism of the founder of the Party with the hard headed pragmatism of his son-in-law who has assumed the electorally risky self-image of an unsentimental corporate executive. The transformation has evoked expressions of an almost childlike glee from the executives of the World Bank and the likes of Bill Gates. And also, one is told, the business organisations and magazines that belong there. Chandrababu knows this, and never tires of declaring that he is nothing but an efficient manager of the affairs of the State in the manner of a company executive. That is not what the people expect from an elected government in this country, nor what the Constitution says it should be, but then the Times we live in have little respect for such backward notions. What remains to be seen is whether Chandrababu will turn out to have been in truth the Dupe of the

Times. For India, luckily for the people, is still a democracy, whatever its considerable warts, and you cannot be the Man of the Times unless you get enough votes. There are, of course, numerous ways of managing votes, and Chandrababu knows all of them. He has indeed been a professional in the matter for many years, now aided by computers. But elections still have a way of taking even the most crafty by surprise. It is not that there is some superior wisdom in the 'people' as editorial writers invariably say at the end of each election, in wholesale expiation of everybody's sins, but various dissatisfactions and expectations in society add up often to a sum not bargained for by the most perfidious manager of elections, notwithstanding all the money, the liquor and the physical threats expended.

Chandrababu, however, is not unaware of this. He knows there is much he has to compensate for in the matter of lost popularity. Relaxation of prohibition on Indian Made Foreign Liquor, reduction in the subsidy given to the cheap rice scheme and power supplied to farmers, and a ruthlessly determined closure of a number of loss-making public sector and cooperative sector industries, unmindful of viable proposals of revival, have certainly earned the resentment of a sizeable section of the population. One cannot, however, add up the numbers and debit the votes, because the argument that the schemes meant for the welfare of a few have rendered the economy bankrupt wins by playing upon common human feelings of guilt, and has been used with considerable success by dint of tireless insistence by governmental spokesmen as well as editorial writers in newspapers; and in any case there is a tendency among the people to see Welfare, not as the rightful due of those who are rendered disadvantaged by unequal social and economic conditions, but as munificence, transient as all charity. It has been repeatedly said, and dinned into the minds of the beneficiaries, that welfare schemes are concessions given to the unreasonable blackmail of the underprivileged, against the common sense of economic reason.

The guilt thus induced is the surest weapon against any opposition to the withdrawal of Welfare. But all said and done, the fear of reduced popularity is there in Chandrababu's mind. That has set him on the search for a public image pleasing to the voters.

He is consequently indulging in a series of activities and policies to this end that are meant to generate popularity, but are distinguished from the populism that politicians of his father-in-law's generation were accustomed to. It is not just that he needs to restore his popularity after having started the dismantling of Welfare schemes. There is a bigger need of the Times involved, and that is what makes it relevant to our purpose: how does the leader in the image of a corporate executive establish hold on popular imagination? To abide by the framework set by the dogma that the 'State should be facilitator and not provider', and at the same time overcome the handicap of invisibility that a mere facilitator would suffer from, which could be fatal in the electoral arena, Chandrababu has proposed the model of an activist facilitator. It is described as taking governance to the people, but it is more of taking himself, or rather his image, to the people. Taking governance to the people can only mean greater decentralisation of governance, but what Chandrababu is doing in fact is in a sense greater centralisation, for his brand of administrative activism concentrates the image of governance in one person: himself. If taking governance to the people is what he actually wanted, the least he could have done is to give honest expression to the spirit of the 73rd and 74th Constitution amendments. But his programmes, on the contrary, barring only the Water Users Associations set up by statute and empowered to participate in the management of local irrigation systems, side-step the local bodies completely and set up the Chief Minister and his party at the centre.

His partymen are also making a lot of money in the process, because Chandrababu's activist governance has involved giving

rural works contracts under the Janmabhoomi programme on an informal basis - on the plea of encouraging the 'people' to undertake their own development - but while Congressmen are crying hoarse about this because it affects their own money-making opportunities, what is more significant about the exercise is the search being made by Chandrababu for a vote-gathering replacement, suitable to the changed Times, for that much derided thing called 'populism'. That may come in use to Congressmen, too, in the days to come.

There is nothing per se wrong in the government encouraging self-help. If the Chief Minister wishes to go around encouraging the people to clean their streets and repair the damaged compound wall of the gram panchayat office or village school, himself holding a helpful broom or spade till the TV cameras leave; or if, as in the Janmabhoomi programme, villagers are encouraged to pool resources for local works to the tune of 50 percent of the cost in the case of small works, and 30 percent in the case of big works, with the government undertaking to supply the remainder; there is no reason to carp about it merely because it may make Chandrababu more popular, or merely because in some places, in the guise of the people's contribution, some local TDP contractor comes forward and puts up the people's share and makes a neat profit out of the whole thing. The criticism of all the political formations in the State, from the Congress to the extreme Left, that all this is a popularity gimmick, is besides the point. Being in politics, he wants to be popular, like all of them. And so long as he does not do positively harmful things for becoming popular - such as pulling down other people's places of worship - there is no point in carping about the desire for popularity as such. A truer criticism would be that the activities are actually resulting in greater centralisation of governance; and a truer warning to the people would be that this activity is intended as a substitute for the Welfare responsibilities of the State, which are being gradually given up as a matter of policy. It is not that whatever benefit or

use the people get from Chandrababu's schemes is necessarily illusory or only beneficial to the rich. That is not the case. It is that Welfare, however meagre, has always meant at least a minimal redistribution of resources. Facilitation, even the activist facilitation of Chandrababu, means on the other hand help rendered on the basis of the existing distribution of resources, whose inviolability is the holy cow of today's ruling development philosophy. Since the Welfare structure is not yet totally disbanded, this distinction is not yet apparent, but it will soon be. It is not the case that such facilitation on the basis of existing distribution of resources benefits only the well to do. That too is not the case, and therefore such facilitation need not at all be uniformly unpopular. Nevertheless, there is a qualitative difference in the change of emphasis from Welfare as some minimal redistribution of resources to facilitation as help given on the basis of whatever resources you have.

For instance: if there are irrigation sources in your village and you are a user (not necessarily a big user), you can participate in their management through the Water Users Association; but if you have no irrigation water available for your use and you wish to sink a borewell so that you may turn your dry strip into wet land, but are too poor to pay the electricity charges at full cost and therefore expect the government to supply electricity cheap, then the answer you get is: nothing doing. The fact that in the last few decades irrigation in Andhra Pradesh has grown mainly because of well water expansion aided by cheap power, and that this has given two square meals a day, and perhaps a little besides, to lakhs of lower middle class farming families in the Telangana and Rayalaseema regions (precisely the kind of families that Chandrababu's used to be about four or even three decades ago) , and that not only is the new Power Policy - that the user pays all - going to put an abrupt end to this expansion, but there may in fact be a retardation, with wet lands going dry because many present users cannot afford to pay the full cost charges, is evidently

a matter of no concern to the prescribers of policy. This is not an argument for endless supply of very cheap power to all rural users. There could be a gradation of prices. But a general philosophical assumption that resources will be efficiently utilised only when the user pays the cost is a different thing altogether.

Notwithstanding the difference, Chandrababu is gambling on whatever popularity the facilitative activism is likely to bring him. Another gambit he is boldly trying out is to contrast the proverbial inertia of civil servants with his own seeming dynamism in hopping from village to village and town to town inspecting the dusty insides of dilapidated revenue record rooms or testing the strength of a tank bund that probably last saw repair before the sun set on the British empire. The gambit has made him unpopular with civil servants, but quite popular with the people: most of his programmes involve the officials visiting villages in the company of MLAs and Ministers and holding themselves open to complaints and questions from the people in the censorious presence of the legislators who successfully act as if they are in no way responsible for the state of affairs. This is one sure way of becoming popular in a country like India where the average civil servant is rarely available even for supplication, let alone complaint or criticism. This is perhaps one thing Chandrababu has learnt from his father-in-law who put to the best populist use the resentment common people have for the officialdom. He managed to make people forget that politicians are as much responsible for the kind of civil service we have in the country. And the son-in-law has taken the cue quite well.

There is palpable tension in the incongruity between the present Times as defined by the World Bank and other policy prescribers for the Third World, and expectations of social and economic democracy buttressed by the possibilities afforded by political democracy in India. The likes of the crafty Chandrababu, of whom there are quite a few in Indian politics and public life,

are on the search for ways of overcoming the tension to the advantage of their view point. Will they succeed, and if so on what terms, with what sort of a redefinition of democracy; and if not, which of the two mutually incongruous terms will prevail to what extent, or what kind of a cancerous body politic will be left behind, are questions for the immediate future. Not questions for contemplation, but positive action.

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Beyond Media Images

Chandrababu Naidu's defeat is the kind of event that lends itself so well to analysis by hindsight that the effort would be too tiresome. In any case, analysts attached to the Left parties have done that as ably as hindsight alone permits, and there is no need to add to their wisdom (by which it is not intended that they are altogether wrong). In fact, Naidu (or 'Babu' as he is known to his admirers in the State) is a classic instance of a phenomenon that the West is probably already very familiar with, but we are only just waking up to: a pervasive media creates a celebrity out of almost nothing, and then calls in experts to explain why its creation turned out to be nothing. Chandrababu is merely an ambitious political schemer, who has managed to con quite a lot of intelligent people because he knows that their hunger for the image he has put on – a Third World politician in the mould of a corporate executive spewing IT jargon and the verbiage of the World Bank's development policy prejudices – is too acute for the normal functioning of their other senses.

This is an effort, in part, to introduce his successor. For, if someone does not do so now, a new myth could soon be in the making, and if the analysts of Left parties participate in its creation, as a homage to coalition politics, one may have to spend a lot of time disabusing the public of it. It is so easy to clothe Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, MBBS with the image of the good doctor

who has turned to politics to cure society, that even without the help of such expertise, the media may itself involuntarily do so. 'Reforms with a human face', which appears to be the current slogan of the Congress, suits the image so well.

The man is anything but a vendor of humane visages. His rise in politics has been accompanied by more bloodshed than that of any other politician in this State. Not bloodshed for some avowed 'higher cause', but bloodshed for the narrowest possible cause: the rise of one individual to political power and prominence. The recent elections may very well have meant many things in terms of popular aspirations, and one has no desire to be cynical on that score. But in the matter of the change of helmsmen, it has merely replaced a man who would find nothing too crooked if it is in his political interest, with one who would find nothing too brutal. And for both, the goal is the same: Power. Such precisely are the men neo-liberalism wishes to find in power in countries such as ours which it wants to subordinate to its logic and interests. It would be imprudent to regard this as an irrelevant consideration on the ground of the Congress Party's avowal of a 'human face', for firstly that expression has no precise meaning, secondly Congressmen are known to be capable of changing course mid-stream, and thirdly India's rulers irrespective of party have knowingly put themselves in a position where they have little leeway in matters of policy.

YSR (as he is known in short) belongs to Cuddapah district of the Rayalaseema region of the State. His constituency, Pulivendula, exhibits a most distressing topography: endless stretches of nude soil studded with gravel and relieved by rocks that are even more bare. It is watered, using the expression figuratively, by the Chitravati, a tributary of the Penna (called Pennair in most maps), itself hardly a river worth the name. Today YSR wishes to be seen as a politician who has responded to the needs of farmers and is determined to do well by them, but in the

nearly three decades of his political life, he has not been instrumental in adding one acre of assured irrigation to the parched lands of the constituency that has again and again returned him or his brother (when YSR chose to go to Parliament instead) to the State Assembly.

His father Raja Reddy was, to begin with, an ordinary farmer and a small time civil contractor. He got converted to Christianity in the days when even upper castes thought there may be material benefit in doing so, and was ostracised by the Reddys of his native village, Balapanur. He shifted to Pulivendula, the tahsil headquarters. He quickly made a name for himself as a rough and violent man with whom one had better not get into a quarrel. To understand how Raja Reddy took advantage of that and paved the way for his son's rise in politics, one must know something about Rayalaseema.

Viewing Rayalaseema

The Rayalaseema districts of Andhra Pradesh are known for severe water scarcity. Though as a matter of convention the four districts of Anantapur, Cuddapah, Kurnool and Chittoor are said to comprise the region, in physical, social and historical terms, only the Madanapalle division of Chittoor district can be talked of in the company of the other three. The rest of Chittoor is in every sense, including average rainfall precipitation, a distinct entity. The other three districts have an average annual rainfall of 618 mm, which is among the lowest in the country. They lie in the basins of the Tungabhadra and Penna rivers, which popular memory associates with bounteous waters once upon a time, but are today mere apologies of streams. The catchment of these rivers gives only a moderate yield, much of which has already been dammed, rendering the river-beds dry along most of the length of the rivers. But the canals from the dams serve only about 4 per cent of the cultivable land in the districts.

The major irrigation source of Rayalaseema, however, used to be the excellent system of tanks constructed by the Rayas of Vijayanagar, from whom the region gets its name. Like the rulers of Hyderabad and Warangal to the north, the Rayas of Vijayanagar got constructed a system of tanks all over the region to husband the scarce water resources and channel them to the fields. Indeed, most of the kings who ruled the various parts of the Deccan, and not merely the Telugu country, built such tanks to provide water for drinking and irrigation to the populace. A characteristic of the irrigation tanks of Rayalaseema is their huge size, probably because rainfall there is even scarcer, and demands even more comprehensive husbanding of water than elsewhere in the Deccan.

This tank system, as indeed everywhere in the Deccan, is however now in a shambles. Almost nothing has been done for their upkeep during the last several decades. Because of the denudation of the land around, even the slightest rainfall causes inrush of water into the tanks, breaching the poorly maintained bund. The breaches merit only the most cosmetic of repairs, and as a result, the tank bunds are but bundles of ill-repaired breaches. For the same reason, all the tanks are heavily silted, so heavily indeed that they look more like irregular-shaped football fields than irrigation tanks. In the days before chemical fertilisers, the silt was prized by farmers as a source of fertile topsoil, but now nobody is interested in taking the silt to fertilise their fields, and so de-silting, if it is to be done comprehensively, would be akin to a mass waste-removal exercise. As such, it is too costly for the funds governments are willing to spare for the upkeep of traditional irrigation systems.

The upshot is reliance on increasing use of groundwater, through deeper and deeper borewells. But this is a self-destructive game, for the deeper farmers dig wells in competition with each other, the deeper they will have to dig next time round. The scarce rainfall cannot sustain this technology-driven thirst for

groundwater. In 2002, in the midst of the second successive year of drought, a middle class farmer of YSR's Cuddapah district had dug a borewell 1,000 feet deep, and still did not find water. ("If only I had persevered a little more, I may have struck oil" was, however, the farmer's only response to commiseration, for a sense of humour rarely forsakes farmers, even in the worst of adversities).

Violence-Prone Society

A harsh physical environment does not necessarily lead to a harsh social life – there is no such homology – but the peculiar history of Rayalaseema, combined with the region's scanty natural endowment, has led to a violence-ridden society. The kingdom of the Rayas was characterised by devolution of the power of administration, more particularly that of 'law and order', down to the lowest level. This was even truer of the border areas which were administered by men whom the British Gazetteers called Polegars ('Palegadu' in Telugu and 'Palayakkaran' in Tamil). They (often) had small forts, and an armed retinue of men, with whose help they maintained order and assisted the collection of revenue. Except in the most well-administered periods, these men were not bound by any known rules of conduct, not to speak of anything resembling law. They behaved like, and in fact were, warlords. With the fall of the Vijayanagar empire most of them became sovereigns over a handful of villages and incessantly raided neighbouring domains for booty and territory. It is said – though there is no hard evidence in this regard – that the villagers caught in this conflict sought refuge with village strongmen who could gather a retinue behind them and play the role of protector. But of course, when they did so, the villagers had to pay for the protection by living in accordance with the protector's writ.

As the fall of the Vijayanagar empire was followed by conflict between the British Indian rulers on the one hand, and the rulers

of Hyderabad and Mysore on the other, much of which took place over the Rayalaseema districts, the warlords as well as any villager who could gather an armed group around him carried a double premium: the battling armies wooed them, and the local people too needed their help to protect them against the marauding soldiers from outside the region. At the end, by the time the British brought the entire region into their control by the beginning of the 19th century, there was left this residue of a social practice: men of the dominant sections would gather an armed gang around them to assert their power, enforce their writ in the village and fight off challengers to their power over society. While the Polegars were mostly of non-cultivating communities such as Boya and Patra, the practice of establishing dominance and exercising power through the force of armed gangs became a characteristic feature of powerful landed communities, generically described as Kapu (husbandsman) but mainly of the Reddy caste in recent decades. The British, who successfully put an end to the Polegars by a carrot-and-stick policy, found to their dismay that this residue continued to disturb their notion of rule of law. They christened these gangs 'village factions', a name that continues to be used to this day. The typical village faction was that of the village headman, called Reddy in Rayalaseema. That appellation today refers to a dominant caste which is present all over the State, and men of the caste tag on Reddy behind their names. But that is a phenomenon of recent decades, more particularly the latter three-quarters of the 20th century. The word has a complex history, one moment of which is that it designated the village headman in the Rayalaseema districts, in the days when village administration was presided over by the institution of hereditary headmen. This Reddy would protect his primacy in the affairs of the village with the most aggressive zealousness. Any challenger to his importance would have to contend with a violent response from him. Though we spoke above of a retinue maintained by such strongmen, it was not a permanent gang maintained only for fighting. Most of

the retinue would be ordinary farmers or labourers who come to the aid of the Reddy when called upon to do so. They would, it goes without saying, benefit in matters where the Reddy had the final say, but passionate loyalty of the Reddy's followers is a characteristic of village factions. Their attachment was never merely a matter of rational calculation.

The dominance of the Reddy would often be challenged by someone in the village. He would invariably be either a big landowner, or an otherwise powerful man, for example, by virtue of his closeness to the ruler of the area. From about the time that the word Reddy started signifying a caste and not just hereditary headmanship, it is seen that in most cases, the challenger is also a Reddy by caste, though there have been important exceptions, especially where the militant Boya community is numerous. That man would gather a group of villagers behind him and fight the group of the 'Reddy'. The people to gather behind him would include, of course, his kith and kin, his tenants and sharecroppers; it would include persons who have suffered at the hands of the 'Reddy'; it would also include persons who have conflicts of interest or ego with the followers of the 'Reddy'; it would even include people who are obliged to the challenger for their day to day life or livelihood, even to the extent of people who, by virtue of the village topography, have to pass by his house or fields to reach their own house or fields.

Once such a challenger emerges, or in the course of his emergence, street fights between the two groups break out at every conceivable instance. The slightest material interest of every member of the group has to be protected or realised by force, and the slightest injury to every ego has to be avenged by force. But everything turns around the primary interest: the leader's pre-eminence in the village, his honour, his writ, his word. For this, lives are sacrificed in a spiral of killings. Every death has to be avenged with a death, every burnt house or haystack with a burnt

house or haystack, and every devastated acre of land with a devastated acre. The implements of fighting in the old days were stones, sticks, and every implement made by the human race for taming nature and making it yield fruit. It was after the 1950s that crude explosives, crude firearms and lately more sophisticated weapons entered village factions. It is an interesting aside that at each stage it was the Communists that were, in all innocence, responsible for modernising the weaponry of faction fights.

The village factionist of yore, as can be imagined, was hardly an epitome of rationality. By the time he was through with his energies he would also be through with much of the property he had: it costs a lot to fight court cases, look after injured followers, repair burnt down dwellings and replace hacked orchards, all to keep his manly pride and moustaches intact. But after the introduction of Panchayat Raj democracy and rural development works, the brutality of village factions acquired the sheen of instrumental rationality. It was quickly realised by the village factionists that the methods used by them to protect the elusive social prominence or importance, could be put to more practical use for rigging polls and winning panchayat elections at the village or block level, and monopolising road and other public works contracts in the village. This started earnestly in the 1960s.

The next and natural step was for a leader to emerge from among the village factionists of an area or from a town nearby, who would gather support of all the powerful factionists of the area, create factionists to fight the recalcitrant, assist the faithful in defeating their rivals, protect their crimes and make it worth their while to indulge in crimes of violence on his account in addition to theirs, and make that the base of his rise in politics at the district level and beyond, and the guarantee of a monopoly of not small or local public works but substantial civil contracts. It took a new generation of men to see this possibility and realise it. YSR was one of the pioneers of this change, which has

terrorised and devastated the social and political life of the Rayalaseema districts.

Communists As Catalysts

The Communists played a peculiar catalyst's role in all this. The undivided Communist Party of India (CPI) had some base in the Rayalaseema districts. Its leader Eswara Reddy was elected MP from Cuddapah on four occasions starting with the first Parliament. It fought – or sought to fight – feudal domination in the villages, but had to contend with the culture of village factions. The Communists, from that day to this, have unfortunately understood factionalism as merely a rather violent form of feudal domination, which may only require a more violent response, and nothing more. That village factions divide all classes in the village vertically, from absentee landlords to the poorest labourers, which vertical division is accompanied by a degree of felt loyalty to the factionist at the top, thereby reproducing the animosity at the top all the way down the line, and that such a state of affairs is seen as the natural ordering of society by all classes, has never been adequately understood by them.

And so when the Communists found it difficult to organise the masses to fight a feudal landlord, they encouraged and supported any upstart who was willing to challenge the landlord's dominance. All that they achieved was to create a new factionist, who would discard the Communists once his purpose was done. Pulivendula was dominated in the early years after independence by Devireddy Nagi Reddy (known as D.N. Reddy), a somewhat haughty landlord, mill owner, some time Zilla Parishad chairman, and some time MP. YSR's father Raja Reddy was willing to take on D.N. Reddy, and the CPI assisted him by helping him to win the block-level panchayat elections. Today, the CPI has all but left the district, but Raja Reddy's legacy continues in the form of his powerful son.

Raja Reddy established his credentials as a man to fear by an incident that people still talk of, nearly 50 years later. The town of Pulivendula has a sizable colony of Erukalas, a Scheduled Tribe, some of whom were known for their unruly ways. They were despised but feared by the higher castes, though it is rumoured that D.N. Reddy was not above using their crimes for his ends. One day one of them, Oosanna, tried to steal the ornaments worn by a woman of the Reddy caste in the bazaar. When the woman struggled, that man cleverly exclaimed that she was his wife and was being disobedient. By the time people realised he was telling a lie, he had slipped away. Later in the day, Raja Reddy reportedly caught hold of Oosanna, dragged him to a public place, poured kerosene on him and burnt him alive. This incident made Raja Reddy a feared man, and people became willing to gather behind him in his conflicts with established leaders. By and by he established immense dominance in the area.

But he lacked money of the kind that would sustain his further rise in politics. This problem was resolved by a combination of chance and brutality just about the time that YSR entered politics. Cuddapah has deposits of the mineral barytes, which was once upon a time not a highly priced mineral. One of the mining leases was held by one Venkatasubbaiah of the Balija caste. Raja Reddy joined him as a junior partner/supervisor (it is not clear which), reportedly because Venkatasubbaiah believed he would be useful in controlling the workmen. Round about the mid-1970s, however, it was discovered that barytes has use in petroleum refining, and its price shot up. Raja Reddy wanted Venkatasubbaiah to hand over the mining lease to him and go. A prominent CPI leader and writer, Gajjela Malla Reddy, brokered a deal whereby Venkatasubbaiah would take Rs 11 lakh and leave the mining lease to Raja Reddy. Venkatasubbaiah refused, and was killed. The mining lease, passed into YSR's hands.

For many years in the latter half of the 1980s and the early half of the 1990s, YSR's barytes mining operation was the subject of one scandal after another. Lease – or sub-lease, after barytes mining became formally the monopoly of the AP Mineral Development Corporation, only to be subleased to the same previous lessees – would be taken for a certain extent, but many times more land around would be mined. Even a piece of land on which stood a protected monument so notified by the Archaeological Survey of India was mined, and one and a half lakh tonnes of the mineral (priced at Rs 600 per tonne) was taken away by the time the government woke up and put a stop to it. And there was the case of a villager, Vivekanandam, whose private land of 1.8 acres was also sub-leased to YSR by the Corporation. Though that man went to court and obtained an injunction against the sub-lease, YSR continued with the mining and took away mineral worth Rs 5 crore. The maternal uncle of the said Vivekanandam, a retired government employee, Rajagopal, set out to Hyderabad, to express his protest to the then Chief Minister Janardhan Reddy, and to move the High Court again. The old man was set upon by a gang in the middle of the State's capital, and had his hands and legs broken. This was as recently as 1992.

With the money flowing from the barytes mines in his pockets, YSR was in a position to undertake the transformation of 'village factions' into full-fledged instruments of political and economic domination at the highest level. There were others of his period – the post-Emergency breed of educated, intelligent and utterly cynical politicians – who made money from other sources, such as for instance excise contracts, and used that wealth in the same manner as YSR to rise to prominence in Rayalaseema politics. The money was used to buy the support of village factionists. The factionist would be helped to overcome his rivals and establish unchallenged power over his area of operation. If a factionist was too adamant and did not heed the call, a rival would

be funded to rise against him. A lot of lives would of course be lost in the process, but then that was, for these gentlemen, a matter of no moment. Once a sufficient monopoly of control over the local factionists was established, the leader's political-economic future was ensured. Elections would be concluded in his favour, and his muscle power would ensure that he monopolised all the civil/excise contracts he coveted. This sounds bland when stated in this fashion, but the process involved a tremendous amount of violence and inaugurated a veritable regime of terror in the area.

Manipulation of the Election Process

Political parties and programmes have meant nothing in Rayalaseema, more

particularly Cuddapah district. The only distinction in that district has been: with YSR and against YSR. Those who are with him can be in his party or in any other party – not excluding the CPI – and similarly those who are against him. On more than one occasion he has exhibited his capacity to ensure that a candidate to the Assembly from his own party who has got a ticket against his will is defeated by a candidate of his choice contesting on a Telugu Desam ticket. Elections in Rayalaseema have meant open violence on polling day to scare away voters and leave the field open to bogus voting, taking away the ballot box to stuff it with ballot papers stamped elsewhere, preventing voters of the rival candidate from entering the polling station, forcing voters to show the stamped ballot paper to the local factionist's man before putting it in the box, and other acts of like nature.

Until recently, a rule followed by the Election Commission was that in the event of death of any candidate, the election would be postponed. Killing defenceless candidates to get the poll postponed is a method not unknown in the more violent parts of our country. Rayalaseema is no exception. In the Assembly polls of 1989, YSR's follower Nagi Reddy fought the Telugu Desam's

Palakondarayudu at Rayachoti in Cuddapah district. In the Parliament polls of 1985, Palakondarayudu, who was then a candidate for Parliament, was unsure of the support of the two main local factions that ruled Rayachoti town. So he is said to have got an Independent candidate, Guvvala Subbarayudu killed and got the election postponed. He thus gained time to rope in the two factions, and succeeded in winning the election held later. In 1989, polls were held simultaneously for Assembly and Parliament. Palakondarayudu was this time a candidate for the Assembly. Apprehensive that he may repeat his victorious performance, YSR's man Nagi Reddy set up a pliant man of their own faction, Avula Subba Reddy by name, as an Independent candidate, and allegedly killed him the day before the election to get the election to the Assembly postponed. It is inconceivable that this could have happened without the knowledge and consent of YSR. In the Parliament poll that took place that day as scheduled, there was an orgy of violence in which five persons were killed in Rayachoti town including a polling officer by name Ahmedullah. The polling officer was dragged out of the polling station and murdered. The Congress candidate was elected to Parliament. The terror created by YSR's group on that day was sufficient for his candidate Nagi Reddy to carry the day when the Assembly poll for the postponed Rayachoti segment was later held.

Parallel with establishing themselves in power by such means, these leaders set themselves up as representatives of the region who would fight the rulers of the State for justice to water-scarce Rayalaseema. It has been the tragedy of Rayalaseema that, unlike Telangana for instance which has a vibrant political climate that throws up activists close to the people, the same leaders who have devastated the region's social and political life with their strategies of gang warfare, have time and again doubled as saviours of the people. But as their interest is merely the furtherance of their political careers, such espousal is short-lived and fruitless.

For about three to four years in the early part of the 1980s, these leaders led major agitations for securing irrigation water to the region. They held lengthy 'padayatras' and boisterous protest meetings. YSR was among those in the forefront. But their interest tapered off once they succeeded in putting pressure upon N T Rama Rao to sanction the extension of the Telugu Ganga[1] project to provide irrigation water to parts of Cuddapah district. Later, the Congress came to power in the State, and many of the agitators became Ministers, but they did precious little for the irrigation needs they had agitated for. Subsequently, the Telugu Desam Party came back to power again, but this time YSR took care not to be seen agitating for the rights of one region. He had aimed his sights higher. He would dislodge Chandrababu and become Chief Minister of the State. Power and power alone has been his guiding light, at each stage of his career, much like Chandrababu. Given the peculiar nature of Rayalaseema society, brute force served YSR's purpose in the initial stages, much as unscrupulous manipulation did in Chandrababu's case. But once he set his sights on Hyderabad, he knew that other methods would have to be tried out, and he has been game for that.

He worked quite systematically towards this end and has succeeded. In the process he has given the impression of being a man who cares for the classes neglected by Chandrababu's model of development. Whether that is really so is, to put it politely, extremely doubtful. That those classes have reposed trust in the Congress Party under his leadership is clear: all analysis as well as impressionistic views point to the issues of irrigation and employment as central to the defeat of the Telugu Desam Party, augmented by the desire for a separate State in the Telangana region. Economists too are agreed that poor growth of employment opportunities, and poor capital formation in agriculture, the latter mainly because of low public investment, are two among the negative characteristics of the Indian economy's

performance in recent years. Too categorical an analysis of voters' preferences is a risky business, but it appears reasonable to suppose that the dissatisfaction generated by these factors lies behind the victory of the Congress. YSR realised it in the course of his pre-election padayatra which brought him face to face with much dissatisfaction regarding issues on which – barring free power to farmers – he had never taken any stand till then. Having realised his debt to the dissatisfaction, he has already gone on record promising heavy investment in major irrigation projects, and free power to farmers, which will encourage private investment to the same end. If he has not issued any immediate policy statements in the matter of employment, that will be declared to be understandable because it is by no means an easy matter. And as for Telangana, YSR has made no secret of the fact that he has neither any understanding of nor sympathy for that cause.

However, it is doubtful that he has any real convictions in regard to the first two issues either, other than the realisation that they have been useful instruments in his ascension to power. If freedom to all prisoners were to serve that purpose, he would equally readily have emptied all the State's jails, without holding any philosophy of punishment commensurate with the act. These may appear to be points not worth labouring at length, and it may even be cleverly said, as the Hindi saying goes, that we are concerned that the fruit be a mango, and not that the tree be a mango tree.

But if correcting economic policy distortions is what the aspirations revealed by the elections are about, we must note that change in irrigation policy from Chandrababu's exclusive espousal of drip irrigation to a more realistic programme is not sufficient by itself. Such change is not by itself inimical to the ruling policies being prescribed in the name of reforms. The whole gamut of the policies concerning resources, opportunities and governmental responsibilities will have to be addressed, even if they have not

been issues on the voters' minds while voting to bring YSR to power. There is little evidence that YSR is committed to a different view of these matters than Chandrababu, or that he is willing to devise ways of standing up to the pressure that the World Bank and other instrumentalities of neo-liberalism have been exerting in these matters. Much of what he is now heard saying against Chandrababu's brand of neoliberal economic philosophy he picked up in the run up to the elections, and was never part of his way of looking at the economy.

It is also to be noted that the forces distorting India's economy to serve a variety of external interests inimical to those of the poor and needy, have not been content with prescribing any transparent economic policy imperatives at all to suit their ends. They have indulged in a number of devious measures behind the backs of the people, with the active connivance of the rulers. Chandrababu was a willing collaborator in this, and YSR is not proof against it. The economic philosophy ruling the world, namely that resources, opportunities and governmental assistance of all kinds are optimally distributed when they are put unreservedly at the service of those who can augment them with the most investment and generate from them the most income, is easily understood when it is plainly stated, and easily dissented from if one has the slightest conviction that progress should be everybody's progress, not at some unspecified date in the future, but with reasonable immediacy. But that policy prescription has not been content with such transparent debates. It has sought to work itself into our polity by opaque devices and has succeeded wherever it has found local collaborators among those in power. Those who believe that YSR will resist where Chandrababu was willing are fooling themselves.

12-06-2004

EPW

Footnotes

[1] Initiated in 1983, the Telugu Ganga project envisaged reaching the waters of the Krishna river to the city of Chennai. After several delays, this became fully operational in 2004. Water drawn from the Srisailam reservoir is diverted through a series of inter-linked canals, over a distance of about 406 km, before it reaches its destination, the Poondi reservoir near Chennai.

Two and a half decades of Perspectives

'Perspectives' as a publication was launched with a spirit of "Let hundred flowers blossom, Let hundred schools of thought contend." The Marxist thought grounded all the theoretical debates on the historical process and unfolding reality but human society and its progress are so complex and multi-dimensional that no theory can ever succeed in grasping the totality of the reality. The comprehension of history and its laws on one side and forms of challenges to exploitation and denial of justice need to be continuously debated to enrich and enlarge the theoretical frontiers; for no discourse can ever be exhausted. Human creativity and experimentation are a perennial process and therefore new experiences and insights are gained. The Perspectives fully realize this complexity and accepts a part of the responsibility to address some of these challenges in the process of enriching civilizational progress. It is in this spirit the Perspectives has been engaged in the publication of a wide range of books in the last two and half decades.

Perspectives is an organization comprising six individuals including K. Balagopal. In an era of commercialization, when publication of books has become increasingly market centric, and publication of dissenting voices became difficult, the need for Perspectives was felt. The 1980s were also days of intensified state

repression and the first publication **'Probings in the Political Economy of Agrarian Classes and Conflicts'** of Balagopal was an act of defiance of oppressive climate. During the last two and half decades the number of publications crossed half a century – on an average two books an year. Each book was selected for its relevance, democratic content and transformative value – in pursuit of the objectives that Perspectives has set for itself. One of the considerations and criteria was the ongoing peoples' struggles for democratic transformation of all the social relations particularly, the agrarian structure. These forces were confronting the powerful, formidable Indian state which has come to subserve the vested interests and gradually giving up the interests of the laboring people – the direct producers of wealth. In short Perspectives published such books which stood by the struggling people and those literary works which sought to elevate and ennoble higher human and democratic values which in turn promote equity and justice.

The publications are aimed at enlargement of democratic space and questioning the state repression. There are books with a rebellious content challenging the established and entrenched forms of social repression that have been reinforcing the structure of dominance and exploitation. We published some books opening a dialogue with peoples' movements which led to intense debates, believing healthy debates and honest differences of opinion deepen the process of democratization. There were also books which were self critical and see that why the progressive and broad left politics, particularly parliamentary left which played a historic role in the past weakened and probed for the causes which may help for reflection and self correction.

There are also books that capture the emerging trends, political, social and economic. The main concerns were globalization, communalization, unfolding violence, suffering and resistance, the dalit, tribal and women's movements, three decades

of Naxalbari and other contemporary issues. Those literary works published were of lasting value including literary criticism. The writings of leading people oriented journalists, sensitive intellectuals, creative writers added value to our initiative. All the publications received wide appreciation of the people who matter. We think in retrospect that this entire initiative has been worthwhile.

Perspectives also instituted lecture series in memory of our member Balagopal. These lectures were delivered by Auna Roy, Harsh Mander, Anand Teltumbde, Gopal Guru on themes of contemporary relevance. We appreciate the gesture of Kakatiya University , where Balagopal worked, in organizing these lectures. Perspectives miss Balagopal and his unqualified support and encouragement. We also recall the association of K. Narasimha Chary, writer and journalist, in the very initial stage. This initial push gave strength to the work of Perspectives in its work for a democratic cause.

We acknowledge with gratitude all those who extended their help and support for our publications through all these troubled times.

We also acknowledge with gratitude all those who shared their eritical views about Perspectives publications.

We always remember with gratitude all those who laid down their lives in the struggles that brought us together.

Hyderabad
25-12-2013

G.Haragopal
PERSPECTIVES

LEADERS BEYOND MEDIA IMAGES
Reflections On Politicians And Their Times
by K.Balagopal

The political and institutional void that globalization caused created conditions which seem to be pushing fascist forces closer to State power. The rise of Modi without any pro-poor stand or any track record of welfarism is patronized by the media which is tied to the global capital in nexus with monopoly capital. Modi can successfully polarize social forces on any ground except economic. Modi's rise is also fully backed by the Sangh Parivar whose worldview is reactionary and backward looking. This time, therefore, it is not merely the re-enactment of authoritarian Mrs. Gandhi's style, but backed by a range of intolerant, organized anti-social forces entrenched in the womb of so-called civil society. It is at this turning point that India needs Balagopal and his penetrating intellect as a counterforce to protect, promote and defend democratic processes, institutions and values. He was opposed to these communal forces to a point of being contemptuous. We also miss Balagopal who was not an academic intellectual but an activist intellectual who made a difference to the theory and practice of democracy and contributed immensely to the enrichment of the form and content of peoples struggles engaged in the transformation of Indian social structure. This book, we hope, will help enliven the society in containing the aggressive march of fascist forces.

- G.Haragopal

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